

# HISTORY *of* WAR



## DAKS OVER NORMANDY

Backbone of the paratrooper assault

VETERANS  
SHARE THEIR  
STORIES

6<sup>TH</sup> AIRBORNE'S  
DARING STRIKE AT  
PEGASUS BRIDGE

JAMES HOLLAND:  
WHY AIR POWER  
SEALED VICTORY

# D-DAY

1 9 4 4 - 2 0 1 9

'I WAS LUCKY'  
GOLD BEACH  
MINE SWEEPER

HOW DECEPTION  
MISSIONS FOOLED  
NAZI DEFENCES



## PLUS

Sun Tzu's 10 greatest  
military maxims

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# KING & COUNTRY'S



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As Australia's Involvement in Vietnam increased the Army decided it required a modern armoured personnel carrier that could more easily navigate through South East Asian jungles, paddy fields, rivers and creeks.

After exhaustive tests and trials in tropical and outback Queensland the Army finally selected the American-made M113.

In March 1965, the first M113A1 APC's arrived in Australia. By June of that same year some of these Aussie M113's were on active service in South Vietnam.

## ARMAMENT

The M113 could and did carry a variety of different weapons however the .50 caliber Browning machine gun was the most common and that is what is mounted on KING & COUNTRY'S upcoming release **VN061**.

This sturdy mixed-media (polystone, white metal and resin), 1:30 scale model includes two figures...

**VN061** M113 US Armoured Personnel Carrier



**VN066**



In addition, we have produced two more individual Armoured Corps figures... **VN063**, a standing APC commander and **VN066** a sitting crew member observing the enemy through his binos.

**VN062**



# Jungle Transport

Now, put all of them next to our previously-released Royal Australian Regiment infantrymen and you have a fine looking collection of 'Aussies in Action' during the Vietnam conflict.

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A sitting vehicle commander up next to the gun plus a 'head and shoulders' crew man in the open driver's hatch.

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Perched on top of this M113 are a brandnew set of 3 x Australian infantrymen **VN062** taking the opportunity to 'ride into battle'.

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Soldiers, Sailors and Airmen of the Allied Expeditionary Force!

You are about to embark upon the Great Crusade, toward which we have striven these many months. The eyes of the world are upon you. The hopes and prayers of liberty-loving people everywhere march with you. In company with our brave Allies and brothers-in-arms on other Fronts, you will bring about the destruction of the German war machine, the elimination of Nazi tyranny over the oppressed peoples of Europe, and security for ourselves in a free world.

Your task will not be an easy one. Your enemy is well trained, well equipped and battle-hardened. He will fight savagely.

But this is the year 1944! Much has happened since the Nazi triumphs of 1940-41. The United Nations have inflicted upon the Germans great defeats, in open battle, man-to-man. Our air offensive has seriously reduced their strength in the air and their capacity to wage war on the ground. Our Home Fronts have given us an overwhelming superiority in weapons and munitions of war, and placed at our disposal great reserves of trained fighting men. The tide has turned! The free men of the world are marching together to Victory!

I have full confidence in your courage, devotion to duty and skill in battle. We will accept nothing less than full Victory!

Good Luck! And let us all beseech the blessing of Almighty God upon this great and noble undertaking.



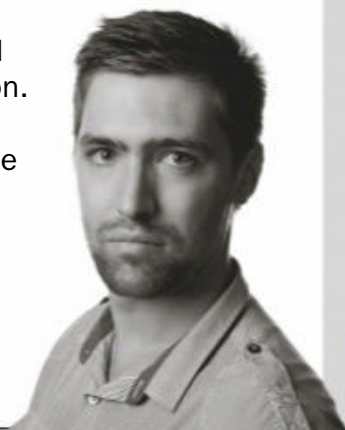
*Dwight D. Eisenhower*

# Welcome

**F**or this special issue, marking the 75th anniversary of the D-Day landings, I felt it only proper to begin with the words of none other than the Supreme Allied Commander, General Eisenhower, which were issued to over 175,000 troops on the eve of the invasion. By the time a successful foothold had been established in Normandy, several thousand of these men were dead, wounded or missing in action.

As the numbers of surviving veterans sadly continue to dwindle, this poignant milestone provides another chance, if one were needed, to reaffirm, "We will remember them."

**Tim Williamson**  
Editor-in-Chief



## CONTRIBUTORS

### TOM GARNER

Tom was privileged to speak with two veterans of the Normandy campaign this month: George Batts, who landed on Gold Beach, and Cedric Wasser, who landed on Sword. Starting on page 26, they share their incredible stories.



### JAMES HOLLAND

This year the renowned historian and broadcaster has published two new books on the 1944 invasion: *Big Week* and *Normandy '44*. Starting on page 40 he describes how the Allies' air campaign was critical to their success on 6 June.



### CHRISTIAN JENNINGS

Christian is a former foreign correspondent and author of several history titles, including his most recent, *The Third Reich Is Listening*. On page 62 he explores how German intelligence operations tried to decode the plans for D-Day.







# MEN OF GOLD AND SWORD

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Thousands of paratroopers and gliders landed behind enemy lines on the night of the 5 June

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Experienced strategists and battlefield leaders were critical to these daring missions

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Six British gliders swoop in to seize this vital position from under the Germans' noses

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For decades, historians and strategists have debated the success of D-Day's airborne missions

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Great Battles

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This remarkable fabric was draped over the coffin of 'Old Ironsides'









## **WAR<sup>in</sup> FOCUS**

### **A READY SWORD**

*Taken: 6 June, 1944*

At around 8.45am, heavily laden Royal Marines of 41 Commando arrive on Sword beach, the eastern-most of the Allied landing zones on D-Day. The British at Sword beach were joined by 176 Free French commandos led by Philippe Kieffer. They were the only French forces to take part on 6 June, and Kieffer was later among the Free French forces to liberate Paris.





# **WAR<sup>in</sup> FOCUS**

## **THE LONGEST WAIT**

*Taken: 1 June, 1944*

American troops are transported to a ship off the coast of southern England, where they will wait for five days until Operation Neptune begins. Allied troops were kept aboard ships in often cramped conditions, waiting for their orders to begin the invasion. Such was the secrecy of the operation, that many soldiers did not learn of their destination until the very last minute.









## **WAR**<sub>in</sub> **FOCUS**

### **“THE EYES OF THE WORLD ARE UPON YOU”**

*Taken: 5 June, 1944*

General Eisenhower meets with US paratroopers in England, before they participate in the airborne landings that night. Over 18,000 troops of the US 101st and 82nd Airborne, and the British 6th Airborne Division, dropped behind enemy lines to support the beach landings.











# **WAR<sup>in</sup> FOCUS**

## **RETURN TO THE BEACHES**

*Taken: 5 June, 2013*

From left to right, Victor Urch, Frank Baugh and Derek Whitehead walk along the sands at Colleville Montgomery. Royal Navy veterans Victor and Frank had both taken part in the landings at Sword, dropping supplies and troops on the beach, while Derek landed as part of the Durham Light Infantry at Gold beach.



## TIMELINE OF...

# D-DAY: THE AIRBORNE INVASION

Allied paratroopers jump into Normandy in audacious operations on 6 June 1944, before fighting fierce battles to secure the landing beaches



### EXERCISE MUSH

"Mush" is an enormous British airborne training exercise, which is spread over three days across Gloucestershire, Oxfordshire and Wiltshire. The vast majority of the paratroopers are unaware that this is the preparation for Operation Overlord.

April 1944

12.20am, 6 June 1944

12.20am, 6 June 1944

12.25am, 6 June 1944

### 1. OPERATION TONGA

"Tonga" is the codename for the airborne operation undertaken by the British 6th Airborne Division. Paratroopers land on the eastern flank of the invasion area near Caen. Objectives include the capture of two bridges as well as destroying the Merville Gun Battery.



Four lieutenants of 22nd Independent Parachute Company synchronise their watches at 11pm, 5 June 1944 at RAF Harwell, Oxfordshire

### 2. MISSION ALBANY

Albany is a night combat assault by US 101st Airborne Division. It sees 6,928 paratroopers jump from 443 C-47 Skytrain aircraft over 39 square kilometres of the southeast corner of the Contentin Peninsula. The operation occurs hours ahead of the beach landings but the paratroopers are scattered by bad weather and German ground fire. Nevertheless, 101st achieves most of its objectives.



General Dwight D. Eisenhower speaks to men of 502nd Parachute Infantry Regiment at Greenham Common Airfield, 8.30pm, 5 June 1944

The crossing over the Caen Canal is better known as "Pegasus Bridge". This pictured bascule bridge is a 1994 replica of the original, which is housed in the Pegasus Museum



### 3. OPERATION DEADSTICK

British paratroopers must capture two strategically important bridges over the Caen Canal and Orne River. Both bridges are captured in a successful operation. 6th Airborne Division can now rejoin the landing Allied armies while German armoured units are hampered in attacking the beaches.





British paratroopers are finally told about the invasion of France after “Mush”. In this picture Major General Richard Gale addresses his men, 4 June 1944



American paratroopers attached to the static line just prior to jumping over Normandy

### MISSION DETROIT

Detroit is a glider airlift for 82nd Airborne that includes equipment reinforcements including artillery, light vehicles, weapons and explosives. 52 Waco gliders are used but only half of the equipment is operational upon arrival. One exception is the delivered 57mm guns that are an added bonus for the paratroopers.

1.20am, 6 June 1944

1.20am, 6 June 1944

2.50am, 6 June 1944



Before Operation Market Garden, the American airdrops into Normandy were the largest airborne assault in the history of warfare

### 4. MISSION BOSTON

Like Albany, Boston is a night assault before the landings but conducted by US 82nd Airborne Division. 6,420 paratroopers in almost 370 Skytrains jump over ten square kilometres on either side of the Merderet River. Some parachute regiments entirely miss their drop zones but 505th Parachute Infantry Regiment captures Sainte-Mère-Église, which is essential to 82nd's success.



### 5. BATTLE OF MERVILLE GUN BATTERY

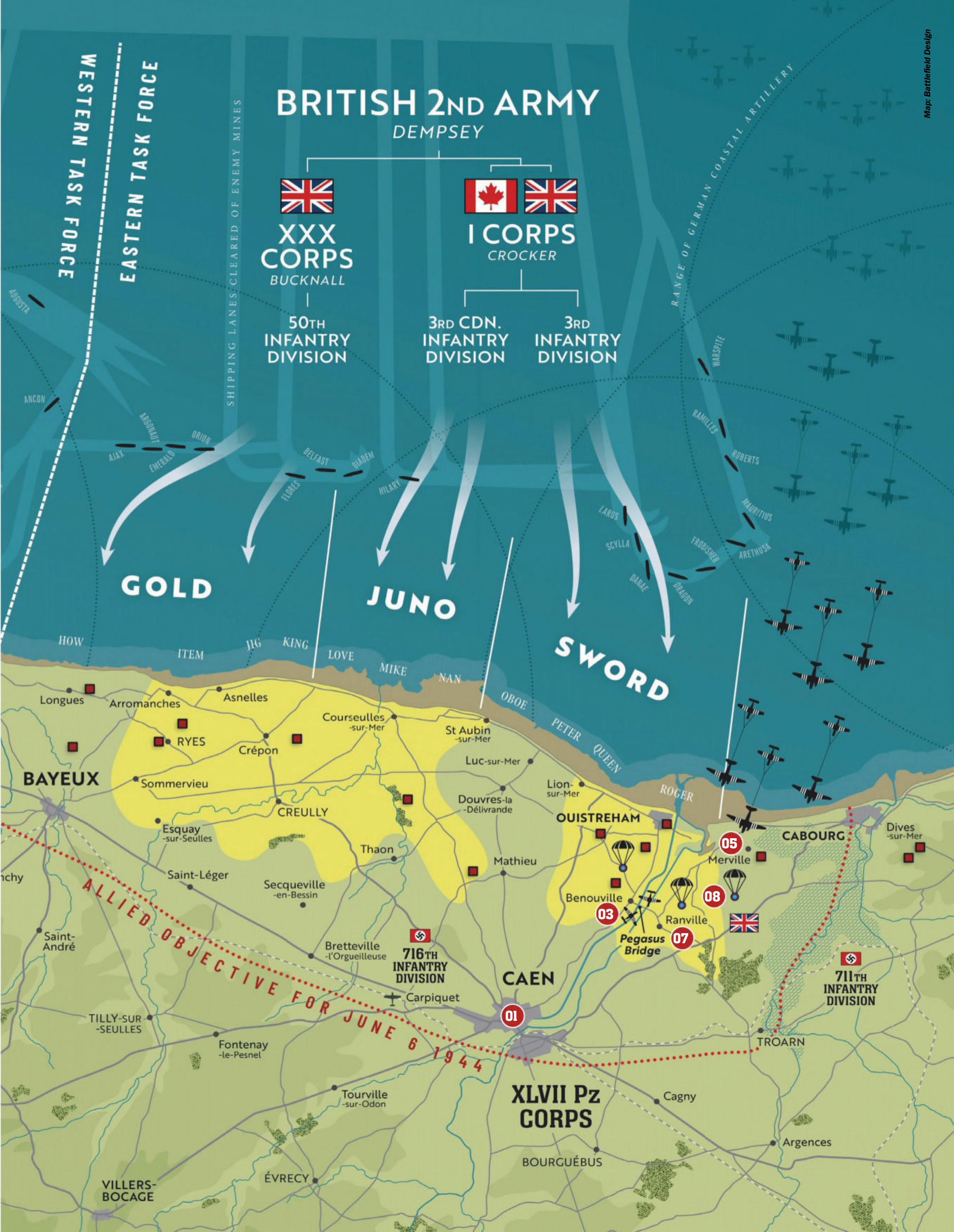
This German battery threatens the British landings at Sword Beach. 9th Parachute Battalion is assigned destroy it but their descent is dispersed over a large area. Only 150 paratroopers out of 600 are able to attack but the battery is captured. Attempts to disable the guns are only partially successful and when the British withdraw the Germans put two of the guns back into action.

An aerial view of the battery that shows the damage caused by an Allied bombing raid in May 1944









# BRITISH 2ND ARMY DEMPSEY

  
**XXX CORPS**  
BUCKNALL

**50TH INFANTRY DIVISION**

   
**I CORPS**  
CROCKER

**3RD CDN. INFANTRY DIVISION**

**3RD INFANTRY DIVISION**

**GOLD**

**JUNO**

**SWORD**

**BAYEUX**

**CAEN**

**XLVII Pz CORPS**

**ALLIED OBJECTIVE FOR JUNE 6 1944**

**716TH INFANTRY DIVISION**

**711TH INFANTRY DIVISION**

**Pegasus Bridge**

**CABOURG**

**OUISTREHAM**

**CREULLY**

**Sommervieu**

**RYES**

**Courseulles-sur-Mer**

**St Aubin-sur-Mer**

**Luc-sur-Mer**

**Lion-sur-Mer**

**Douvres-la-Délivrande**

**Mathieu**

**Thaon**

**Secqueville-en-Bessin**

**Saint-Léger**

**Esquay-sur-Seulles**

**Longues**

**Arromanches**

**Asnelles**

**Crépon**

**LOVE**

**MIKE**

**NAN**

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**PETER QUEEN**

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Brigadier General Anthony C. McAuliffe, artillery commander of the 101st Airborne Division, gives his glider pilots last minute instructions before the take-off on D minus 1



“UNDER THE DIRECTION OF FIRST LIEUTENANT RICHARD WINTERS, 23 PARATROOPERS OVERCOME 60 GERMAN SOLDIERS WITH FOUR MACHINE GUNS”

4.00am, 6 June 1944

### MISSION CHICAGO

Elements of 101st Airborne conduct a pre-dawn glider assault to reinforce Mission Albany. Dense cloud and fog means that successfully descending onto landing zones is difficult. Nevertheless, most equipment transported by glider is delivered to the rest of the division.



Paratroopers landing in France, 1944

8.30am, 6 June 1944

### 6. BRÉCOURT MANOR ASSAULT

“Easy Company” of 506th Parachute Infantry Regiment, 101st Airborne disable a battery of four German howitzers. Under the direction of First Lieutenant Richard Winters, 23 paratroopers overcome 60 German soldiers with four machine guns. 20 Germans are killed and 12 are captured while the Americans suffer losses of four killed and two wounded.



The memorial at Brécourt Manor. This engagement has since been lauded as a classic example of small-unit tactics that can overcome a larger enemy force

9.00pm, 6 June 1944

### 7. OPERATION MALLARD

Glider infantry and divisional troops are airlifted to reinforce 6th Airborne Division on the left flank of the British invasion beaches. Two landing zones ‘N’ and ‘W’ are used and 246 out of 256 gliders arrive safely.



Horsa gliders litter Landing Zone ‘N’ close to the Ranville-Salanelles road, 7 June 1944



## BATTLE OF CHERBOURG

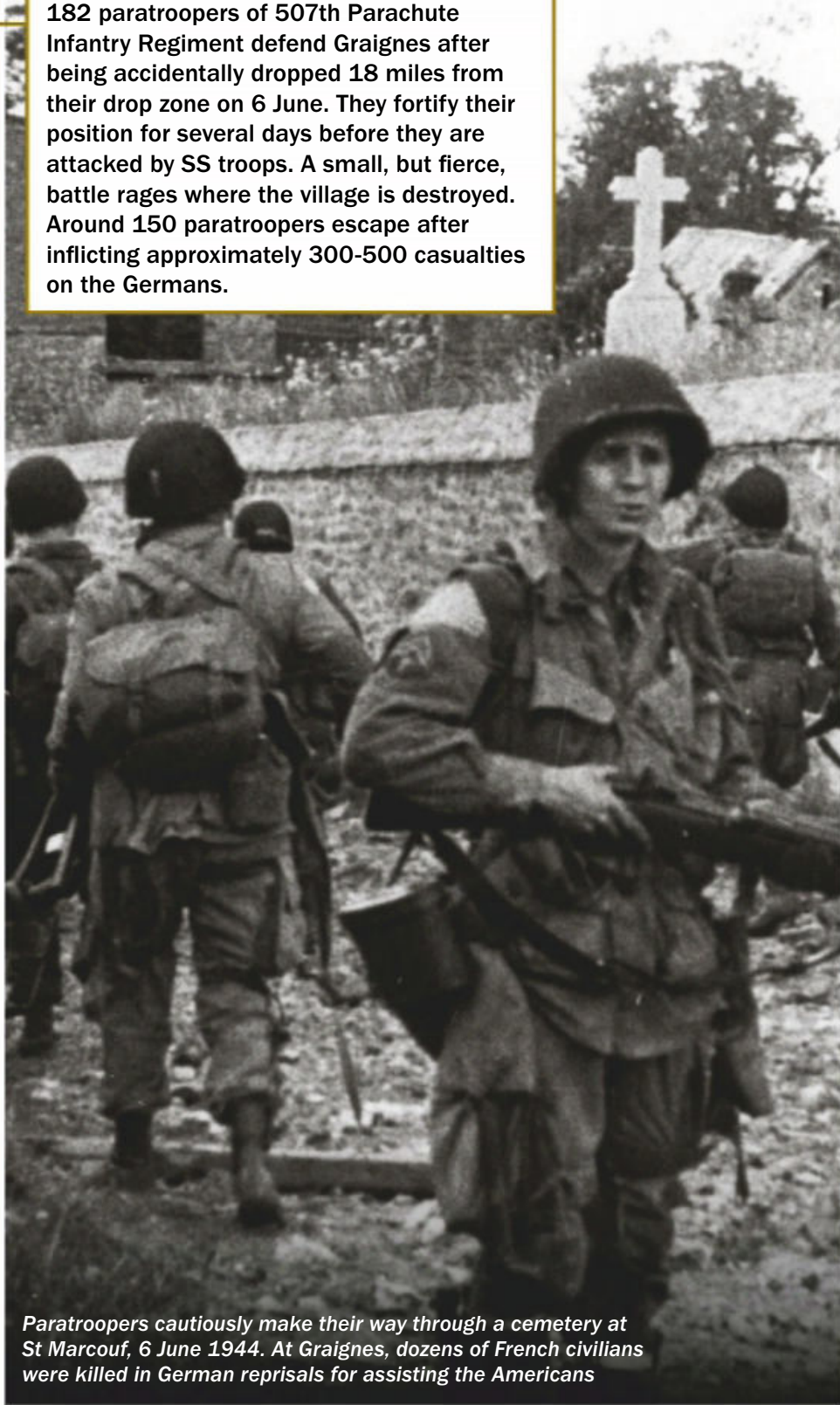
The landing of 82nd and 101st Airborne Divisions enables US infantrymen to isolate the fortified port from Utah Beach. Starting from 6 June, the paratroopers are able to secure most of the routes on the Contentin Peninsula although Cherbourg is not captured until 30 June.



American soldiers march away German prisoners following the fall of Cherbourg

## 9. BATTLE OF GRAIGNES

182 paratroopers of 507th Parachute Infantry Regiment defend Graignes after being accidentally dropped 18 miles from their drop zone on 6 June. They fortify their position for several days before they are attacked by SS troops. A small, but fierce, battle rages where the village is destroyed. Around 150 paratroopers escape after inflicting approximately 300-500 casualties on the Germans.



Paratroopers cautiously make their way through a cemetery at St Marcouf, 6 June 1944. At Graignes, dozens of French civilians were killed in German reprisals for assisting the Americans

Images: Alamy, Battlefield Design, Getty

9.10pm, 6 June 1944      6 June 1944      7-13 June 1944      10-12 June 1944      10-14 June 1944

## MISSION ELMIRA

Elmira is the final glider assault of 82nd Airborne on D-Day. Reinforcements are flown in to isolated paratroopers south of Sainte-Mère-Église but the landing zones are compartmentalised in orchards and fields with trees and high hedges. Ground fighting is visible from the air and 183 paratroopers and pilots are killed. Despite the problems, the American air superiority saps German morale.



C-47 Skytrains cut loose their Waco CG-4 gliders during Mission Elmira

## 8. BATTLE OF BRÉVILLE

Elements of 6th Airborne Division attack German positions in order to secure the Allied beachheads. During a battle that lasts several days, the paratroopers commit their only reserves and are supported by tanks. Bréville is finally captured and the Germans never seriously attempt to break through British airborne lines again.



6th Airborne paratroopers and commandos pictured after a link up between the two forces. At Bréville, all British officers or sergeant majors become casualties

## 10. BATTLE OF CARENTAN

Carentan is located in a pivotal position between Omaha and Utah. It takes 101st Airborne two days to reach the town from 8 June because of limited approaches. The battle begins on 10 June with the Germans abandoning Carentan two days later. 101st and American tanks then repulse a counterattack before the position is secured along with the beaches.



Paratroopers move through a field at Carentan while passing members of their own unit who have been killed by German snipers, 14 June 1944



# ALLIED AIRBORNE HEROES

Allied airborne forces were amply manned on D-Day by energetic, visionary and courageous commanders as well as a future film star

## SIR RICHARD GALE

THE "BLUFF" BUT SUCCESSFUL COMMANDER OF 6TH AIRBORNE DIVISION  
1896-1982 MAJOR GENERAL UNITED KINGDOM

Gale joined the British Army at the outbreak of WWI and was commissioned as an officer in 1915. He saw heavy action the Western Front in machine gun companies during the battles of the Somme and Passchendaele and was awarded the Military Cross in early 1918. Gale remained in the army throughout the interwar period but, despite his heroic war record, he was only a major by December 1938.

Nevertheless, Gale was known as a "strong personality and leader with plenty of ambition" and he was promoted at the direction of Winston Churchill to command 1st Parachute Brigade in 1941.

Although he was physically unsuited to parachuting, Gale was popular with his men and British airborne services were expanded threefold. In April 1943 he was promoted to acting major general and commander of the newly formed 6th Airborne Division.

Gale's task was to make 6th Airborne ready for the invasion of

Europe but no whole British paratrooper division had been taken to a battlefield by air at full strength. He shrewdly drew on the technical ideas of his subordinates for planning and training but remained 6th Airborne's binding influence.

Gale was also successful in befriending his American counterparts and although they outnumbered the British paratroopers, 6th Airborne was responsible for the eastern flank of the invasion of Normandy.

The British airborne operations of 6 June 1944 were highly successful and included the capture of Pegasus Bridge, which was achieved with light casualties. Gale himself landed in Normandy by glider at dawn and the success of his paratroopers meant that they stood on an equal footing with the Americans. He was subsequently awarded the Distinguished Service Order and was in command of the entire British Airborne Corps by the end of the war. Gale later replaced Bernard Montgomery as the Deputy Supreme Allied Commander in Europe for NATO in 1958.

Nicknamed "Windy", Gale was described as a "tall, bluff, ruddy individual" and "a bit of a buccaneer"

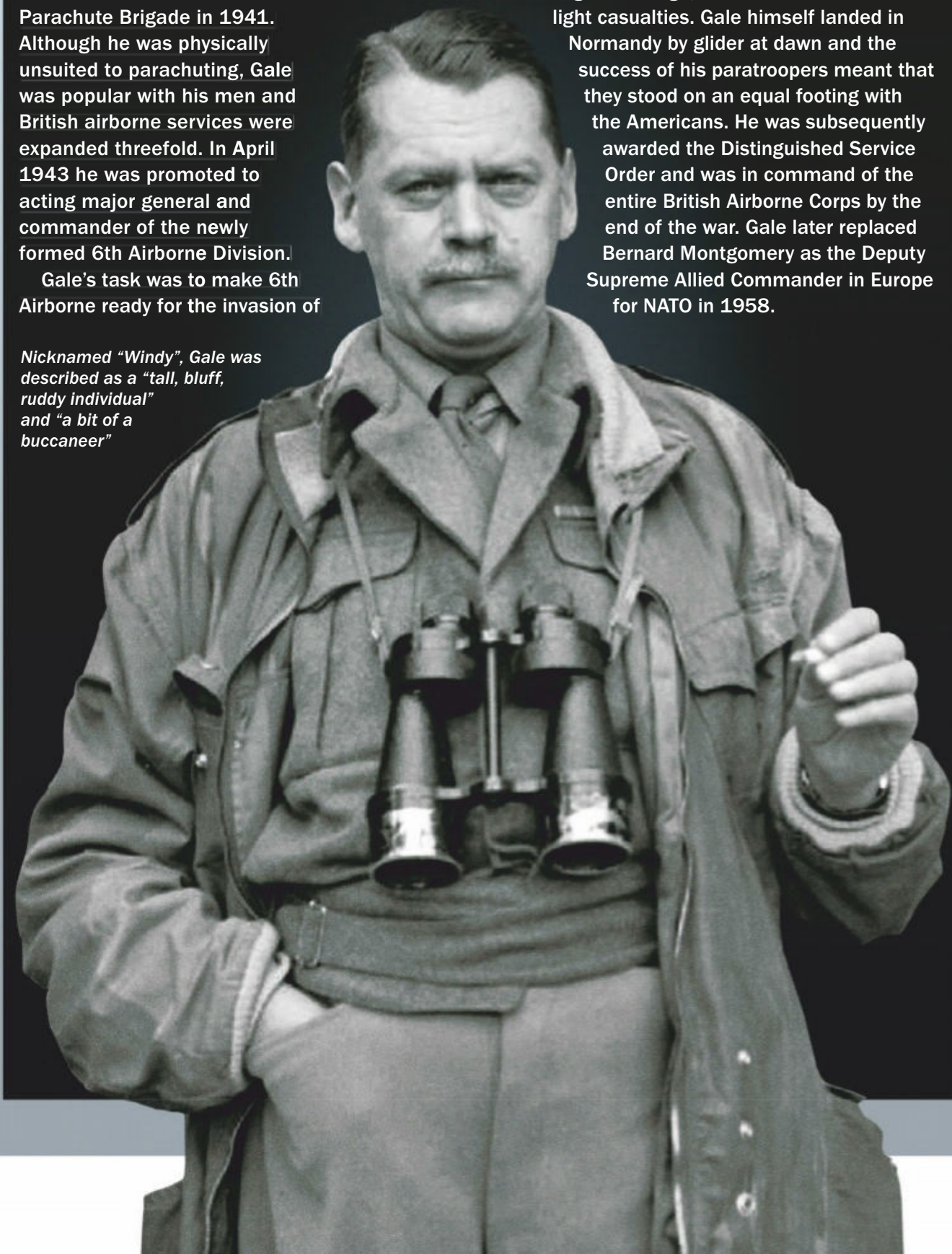
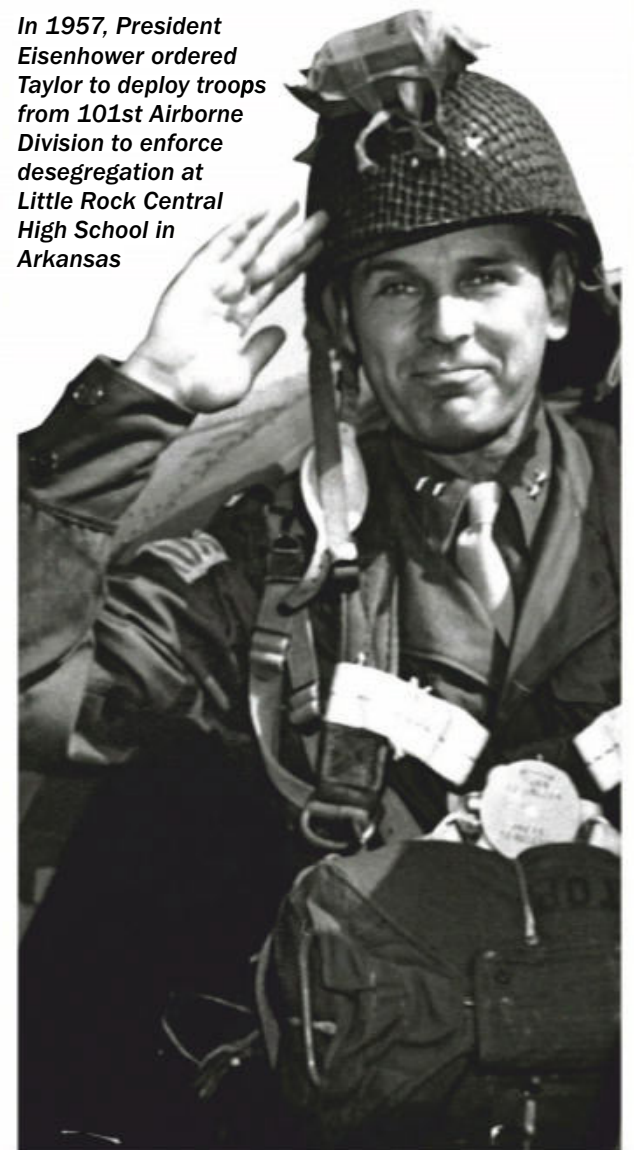
## MAXWELL D. TAYLOR

THE LAST-MINUTE COMMANDER OF US 101ST AIRBORNE DIVISION  
1901-87 MAJOR GENERAL UNITED STATES

Taylor trained at West Point and graduated fourth in his class in 1922 before he was commissioned into the US Army Corps of Engineers. Having transferred to staff duties, Taylor was a brigadier general by 1942 and became chief-of-staff for 82nd Airborne Division in Italy. Despite his high rank he was active behind enemy lines and was greatly praised by Dwight D. Eisenhower.

Taylor unexpectedly became the commander of 101st Airborne Division in May 1944 when the first commander of the "Screaming Eagles", William C. Lee, suffered a heart attack. Now a temporary major general, Taylor jumped with his division on 6 June and was the first Allied general to land in France on D-Day. He went on to command 101st during the Battle of Normandy until they left the frontline in late June. Taylor later commanded the division during Operation Market Garden and was also influential in both the Korean and Vietnam wars.

In 1957, President Eisenhower ordered Taylor to deploy troops from 101st Airborne Division to enforce desegregation at Little Rock Central High School in Arkansas



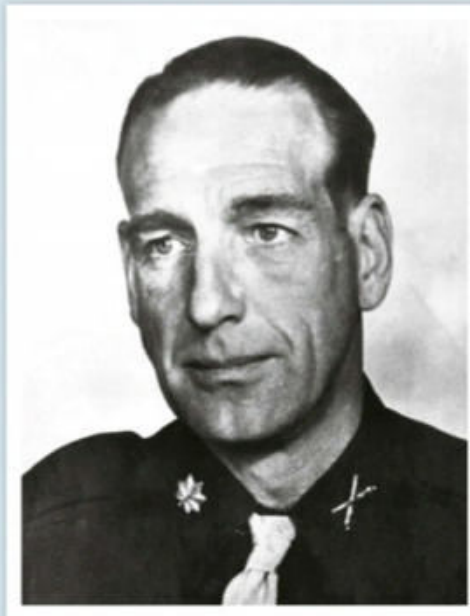


**DON PRATT**

THE HIGHEST-RANKING OFFICER TO BE KILLED ON D-DAY  
1892-1944 **BRIGADIER GENERAL** UNITED STATES

A native of Missouri, Pratt enlisted in the US Army in 1917 and was commissioned as a lieutenant. He variously served as an adjutant and instructor during the 1930s before he was appointed chief-of-staff to the 43rd Infantry Division. From August 1942, Pratt was the deputy commander of the newly formed 101st Airborne Division with the rank of brigadier general.

For 6 June 1944, Pratt had originally been assigned to command the reserves of 101st that were going to be landed at sea. However, he received permission to land with a force of Waco Gliders as part of Mission Chicago as a passenger. He was unqualified to jump by parachute and the underside of his glider was reinforced with steel to prevent enemy fire from piercing the aircraft. Pratt was sitting in the front passenger seat of a Jeep but when the glider slammed into trees in Normandy he was pitched forward and died of a broken neck. He was the highest-ranking Allied officer to be killed on D-Day.



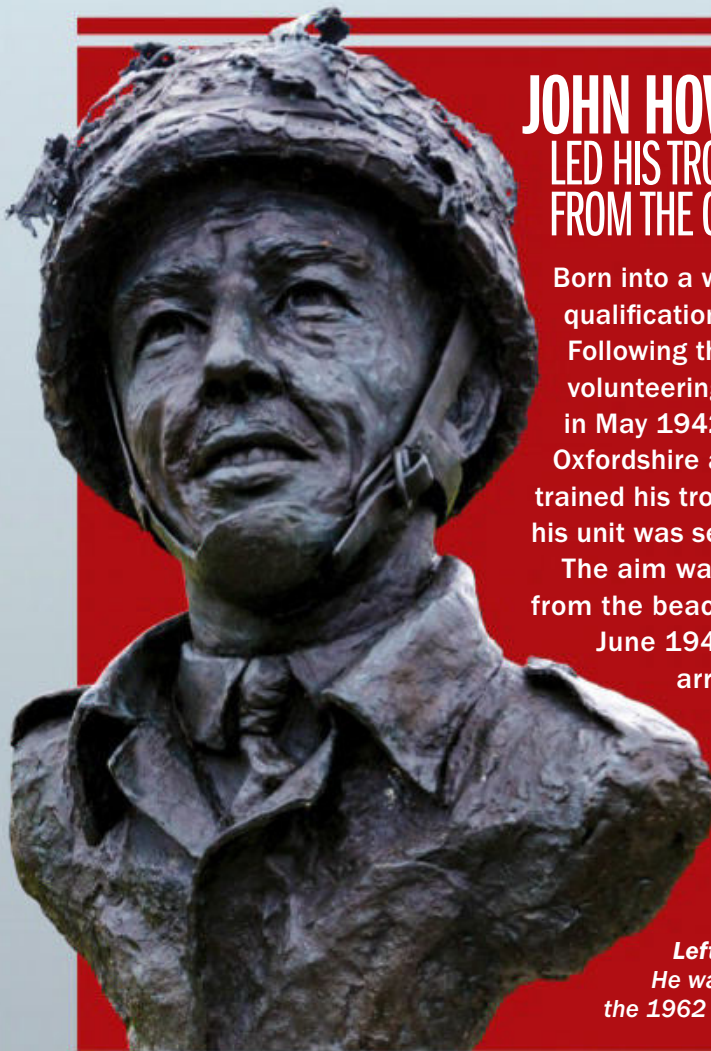
Above: Pratt is buried in Arlington National Cemetery and has a 101st Airborne museum named after him at Fort Campbell, Kentucky

**JOHN HOWARD**  
LED HIS TROOPS TO SUCCESSFULLY CAPTURE TWO BRIDGES  
FROM THE GERMANS 1912-99 **MAJOR** UNITED KINGDOM

Born into a working-class family, Howard left school without qualifications and joined the British Army as a private in 1932. Following the outbreak of war, he was commissioned before volunteering for airborne services. Howard became a major in May 1942 and commanded D Company, 2nd Battalion, Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire Light Infantry. He vigorously trained his troops in gliders, despite being frequently airsick, and his unit was selected to spearhead Operation Deadstick.

The aim was to capture two road bridges five miles inland from the beaches at Ranville and Bénouville. On the night of 5 June 1944, Howard's force flew in six Horsa gliders and arrived on target shortly after midnight. His men rapidly defeated the German defenders and seized the bridges within ten minutes. A German counterattack was fought off before Howard was relieved near midnight on 6 June. He was awarded the Distinguished Service Order for his leadership and courage.

Left: A bronze memorial bust of Howard at Pegasus Bridge. He was portrayed by fellow airborne veteran Richard Todd in the 1962 film *The Longest Day*

**RICHARD TODD**

STAR OF THE DAM BUSTERS WHO JUMPED INTO NORMANDY  
1919-2009 **CAPTAIN** UNITED KINGDOM

Although he was most famous for portraying Wing Commander Guy Gibson VC in the 1955 film *The Dam Busters*, the Irish-born actor was also a distinguished WWII veteran himself. Todd had already begun his acting career when war broke out but he joined the British Army and was commissioned in 1941. After serving in the King's Own Yorkshire Light Infantry, Todd joined the 7th (Light Infantry) Parachute Battalion. He was one of the first British paratroopers to jump into Normandy at 12.40am on 6 June 1944 and his unit landed after Major John Howard's men had captured the Ranville-Bénouville crossings.

Todd and his men were tasked with preventing German reinforcements from reaching the landing beaches and fought at Pegasus Bridge. They ended up fighting for 21 hours and were not relieved until the following night. Despite his subsequent fame as an actor, Todd later said, "I would prefer to be known for what I achieved on the ground on D-Day."



Below: Todd later portrayed Major John Howard in *The Longest Day*. During his acting career he was nominated for an Academy Award and won a Golden Globe

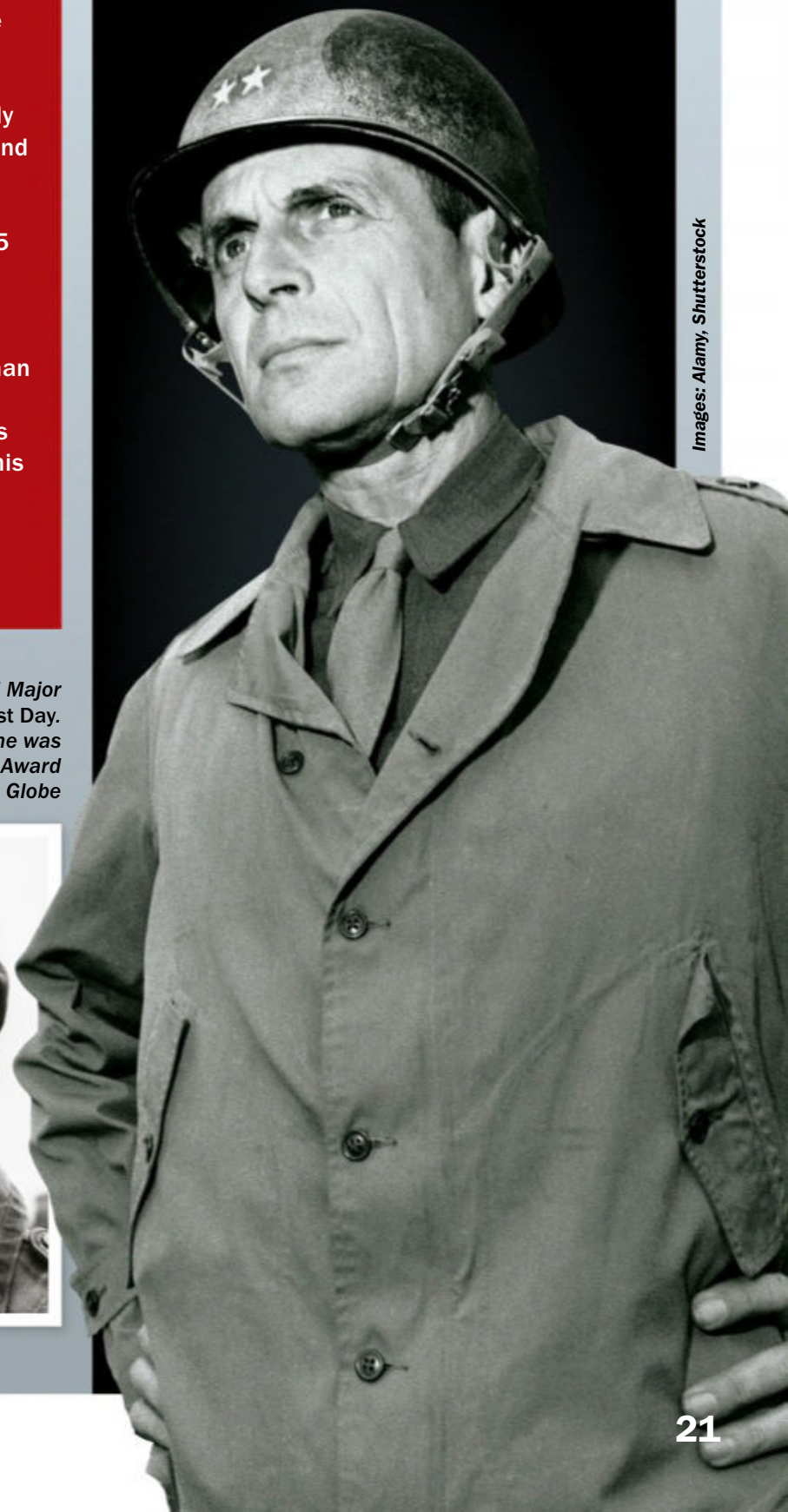
**MATTHEW RIDGWAY**

THE MASTERMIND BEHIND THE AMERICAN  
AIRBORNE CONTRIBUTION ON D-DAY  
1895-1993 **MAJOR GENERAL** UNITED STATES

Ridgway was the son of an American artillery officer and graduated from West Point in 1917. After a spell as the governor-general of the Philippines, Ridgway became an assistant to the staff of George Marshall's US Fourth Army until 1942. In that year he was promoted to command the new 82nd Airborne Division and worked on the planning for the invasion of Sicily in 1943.

Ridgway was instrumental in arguing for two American airborne divisions to take part in Operation Overlord. He jumped with 82nd on 6 June and the division fought for 33 days during the Battle of Normandy. Until it was relieved from front line duty in early July 1944, 82nd suffered 46 per cent casualties. Ridgway went on to command XVIII Airborne Corps, which played a significant role during the Battle of the Bulge and Operation Varsity. He led the corps into Germany but did not escape injury when he was wounded by enemy grenade fragments on 24 March 1945.

President Ronald Reagan said of Ridgway in 1986, "Heroes come when they're needed; great men step forward when courage seems in short supply"





# PEGASUS BRIDGE

In one of the most daring airborne missions on 5-6 June, six gliders were used to grab two bridges from under the Germans' noses

**T**he British 6th Airborne Division had the job of securing and holding the British left flank. To accomplish this, they were to be dropped by parachute and glider to the northeast of Caen. Their target was the wooded ridge in the Bois de Bavent area, the German battery at Merville and several local bridges. The River Orne and Caen Canal run parallel from Caen to the coast. Between the villages of Bénouville and Ranville the coastal road was carried over the waterways by two bridges.

## Glider assault

Possession of the bridges was crucial because it would permit Montgomery to breakout eastward and stop Rommel bringing up reinforcements.

The planners decided the best way to take these was by employing a glider-borne coup de main ahead of the main parachute drop. To Major John Howard's D Company, 2nd Battalion, Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire Light Infantry fell the honour of being the very first British troops of the invasion force to set foot in Nazi occupied France. "My company was lucky to be selected for what turned out to be a wonderful operation," recalled Howard. "It would be a night landing and they chose gliders to do the job as distinct from parachutists in order to get complete surprise."

## German defences

Howard set about preparing his men. He was greatly aided by an enormous 12-foot model of

the bridges' location produced as a result of RAF reconnaissance flights. British intelligence assessed that they were held by a company of about 50 German soldiers. Most of whom were billeted at Bénouville. Both bridges were rigged for demolition and the Caen Canal bridge was thought to be the most heavily defended. The latter was protected by a pillbox on the eastern side, which was thought to house the detonator for the demolition charges. In addition, the Germans could call on several companies in the area should they be needed.

## The snag

Just before they were about to go, aerial photographs showed that on the landing zones the Germans were erecting long poles

*Men of the 6th Airborne Division getting ready for their D-Day drop*





to deter airborne assault. Howard summoned his leading glider pilot Staff Sergeant Wallwork and showed him this unwelcome development. “That’s just what we needed,” said Wallwork after examining the photos closely. Howard’s heart sank. “You remember that embankment where we end up by the road,” continued Wallwork. “Well, we’ve always been worried about piling into that if we overshot the landing zone.” Howard nodded not sure where the conversation was going. “A heavy landing and one grenade going off by accident...” Howard nodded again. “Now these stakes are just right. They’re spaced so as to take a foot or two off each wing and pull us up just right.”

### Right on target

At 10.00pm on 5 June 1944 as the men loaded their equipment and clambered into their gliders Howard wished them luck. The first tow plane rumbled along the runway with its glider behind it at 10.56pm.

In Howard’s glider platoon commander Lieutenant Den Brotheridge opened the door once over Normandy and saw the lines of the canal and river below them. There was a rush of air and the glider skids hit the ground and the aircraft bounced into the air again. The second time it came down it stayed there



crashing along until finally lurching to a halt. It was 12.20am and they had landed just 47 feet from the German pillbox.

Howard bumped his head and for a moment could not see. At first in a panic he feared that the impact had blinded him, then realised to his embarrassment that his helmet had simply slipped over his eyes. “Den Brotheridge said ‘Gun out,’ which was me,” recalled Private William Gray. “Out I jumped, stumbled on the grass because of the weight I had on me, and set the Bren [gun] up facing the bridge and the rest of the lads jumped out.”

By a stroke of good luck, the glider’s nose had gone through the German barbed wire.

Back in England Howard had cheekily asked the pilot if he could do this so they would not have to use explosives to make a breach. Howard was delighted “we really caught old Jerry with his pants down”. Men ran forward and tossed grenades through the pillbox slits and then over the bridge. “I saw a German on the right-hand side and let rip at him and down he went,” observed Private Gray. “I still kept firing going over the bridge and on the other side was another German and he went down too.” The crossing was not without casualties. Lieutenant “Sandy” Smith, who had broken an arm on landing “arrived at the other end to find Brotheridge dying”. Howard’s other two gliders also landed right on target.

### “Ham and Jam”

The men under Lieutenant Dennis Fox assigned to take the Orne bridge captured it without firing a shot. This was fortunate as two other platoons went astray. Once informed Howard instructed his radio man to signal the code words for success, which were suitably British “Ham and Jam”. At 12.50am the 7th Para Battalion were dropped to relieve Howard’s men and the rest of the division comprising the 3rd and 5th Parachute Brigades were dropped on the other objectives.

## ACHTUNG PANZERS! TAKING ON GERMAN TANKS WITH UNRELIABLE WEAPONRY

Howard had been warned to expect a German counterattack within an hour of landing. At 01.30am he “heard the ominous sound we most dreaded ... two tanks were slowly coming down the road”. They were heading along the Ouistreham road toward the junction just to the east of the Gondrée café. The only anti-tank weapon his men had was the largely unreliable PIAT, which had a range of just 50 yards and often fired duds.

Nonetheless they engaged the lead tank. Lieutenant Smith observed “there was a sharp explosion as Sergeant Thornton ... had fired at it at point blank range”. It was at this point that Captain Todd and 7 Para came trotting over the Orne bridge to get to the canal. Looking ahead Todd saw the explosion “I thought oh God, a real battle has started”. Their job was to hold the perimeter west of the canal ready for the arrival of Lord Lovat’s Commandos.



**“POSSESSION OF THE BRIDGES WAS CRUCIAL BECAUSE IT WOULD PERMIT MONTGOMERY TO BREAKOUT EASTWARD AND STOP ROMMEL BRINGING UP REINFORCEMENTS”**



# WERE D-DAY'S AIRBORNE LANDINGS ALMOST 'FUTILE SLAUGHTER'?

Some historians have criticised the paratrooper missions with the benefit of hindsight, but one general at the time also argued they were doomed

**O**n paper at least the Allied airborne landings supporting D-Day were simple enough. The idea was to protect the flanks using two American divisions to the west and one British division to the east. The only problem with this was that nothing had been attempted on such a scale before and the landings the previous year in Sicily had not gone well. To make matters worse Field Marshal Erwin Rommel had flooded large areas of Normandy just behind the coast and sown it with obstacles quaintly dubbed "Rommel's Asparagus".

To some the whole enterprise seemed madness. In particular, it greatly troubled Air Chief Marshal Trafford Leigh-Mallory, in overall command of the Allied air forces. His staff estimated that the airborne assault could suffer over 80 per cent casualties – if that happened it would be a wholesale massacre.

A highly alarmed Leigh-Mallory less than a week before D-Day went to see the Allied Supreme Commander General Eisenhower. He warned him that the American divisions were facing "futile slaughter".

Leigh-Mallory pointed out to Ike that the American divisions were going to come in from the west over the Channel Islands. This would give the Germans ample warning and flying in a full moon they would have to cross the Cotentin peninsula in the face of German searchlights and anti-aircraft guns.

The British flying directly across the channel to get to the Orne river were not so at risk. At

least on this route gaps had been detected in the German flak defences.

Ike was taken aback that the airborne forces "participation had been so severely questioned by the air commander". This was the last thing he wanted to hear, everything was in place after months and months of detailed planning. The American drops were vital in securing the causeways off Utah beach as well as neutralising the Germans' inland batteries. If he called them off, then the Utah landings would have to be cancelled as well. This would leave a single American beach further east designated Omaha. It would also place the US army even further from its primary goal – the port of Cherbourg.

Leigh-Mallory was a highly experienced commander and Eisenhower respected his advice. Diplomatically Eisenhower asked him to put his concerns in writing. He then consulted his other airborne commanders. "I was encouraged," recalled Eisenhower, "to persist in the belief that Leigh-Mallory was wrong!" Nonetheless, he was still taking an enormous gamble that his airborne divisions would not be shot out of the sky before they ever reached their drop zones.

On the night of 5-6 June 1944 Ike, bowed with worry, watched the US 101st Division depart for Normandy. Naval aide Captain Harry Butcher noted the general wanted to watch them "load for the great flight – one which Leigh-Mallory said would cost so heavily in lives and planes". Once they were all in the air Ike shed a tear, such was the burden of command.

The British 6th Airborne's drop miraculously went like clockwork. In contrast, as Leigh-Mallory predicted, the US 82nd and 101st drops rapidly came to grief. Although German flak over the Channel Islands did no harm, the weather intervened once over the French

coast. Heavy cloud forced the transport aircraft to scatter for fear of collision and when they emerged they were greeted by search lights and more flak. The drop turned to chaos.

Some pilots desperately dived to escape enemy fire and dropped their paratroopers at too low an altitude for their parachutes to fully deploy. Men were scattered everywhere and the two divisions became mixed up in places. At Ste-Mère-Église they dropped directly into the German held village with predictable results. Others falling into the flood waters burdened with heavy equipment were drowned.

When the American gliders came in across the channel, many were smashed on landing as they hit hedgerows, stone walls, trees and Rommel's Asparagus. Half the 82nd's gliders missed their landing zone altogether and they suffered a 16 per cent casualty rate. Both divisions lost most of their radios and those retrieved were damaged beyond repair. In consequence Generals Ridgway and Taylor found it very difficult to communicate with their men. This was not a good start.

It seemed that Leigh-Mallory had been right all along. The operation was turning into a failure of epic proportions. However, he had not taken into account American training and morale. Nor did he know how the Germans would react. While the anti-aircraft gunners were quick to respond, on the ground the German army was caught completely by surprise. Rommel had gone home for his wife's birthday. German intelligence was patchy and many senior commanders were away in Rennes taking part in a wargame. Confusion reigned. The American paratroopers and glider infantry dusted themselves off and got on with the job. It was not long before German communications were cut and gun batteries stormed. They also reached the Utah causeways.

News filtered in that the British had secured the Orne and Caen Canal bridges with minimal losses. The Americans were also achieving their goals despite all the mishaps. Both Eisenhower and Leigh-Mallory were highly relieved that the airborne operations were not turning into bloodbaths. Eisenhower noted that Leigh-Mallory "was the first to call me to voice his delight and to express his regret that he found it necessary to add to my personal burdens during the final days before D-Day". The Allied airborne assault had not turned out to be a "futile slaughter". The airborne forces had gained most of their objectives and were drawing the Germans meagre reserves away from the invasion beaches.

*Left: Air Chief Marshal Leigh-Mallory was convinced the airborne assault on D-Day would be a massacre*

*Coming in from the west the US airborne forces were very exposed to German flak*







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*Private William Millin was a commando piper who became famous when he played the bagpipes under fire while landing at Sword*





# MEN OF GOLD AND SWORD

WORDS TOM GARNER

Two British D-Day veterans recall their moving experiences of landing in Normandy

**D**-Day was the culmination of years of planning and the Allied aim was nothing less than the liberation of occupied France, the defeat of Nazi Germany and the end of the Second World War.

Of the 13 participating Allied nations, the landings were led by the USA, Canada and Britain. The latter played a key role and the invasion itself was launched from the south coast of England. All three of the Allied commanders responsible for land, sea and air forces were British and so were nearly half the troops.

British forces were designated to land en masse at two of the five Allied invasion

beaches: Gold and Sword. The fighting at these beaches and in the Normandy countryside was extremely hard and by the time the campaign ended in August 1944, 22,442 British servicemen had died. Nevertheless, their sacrifice was not in vain and the liberation of occupied Western Europe was completed in less than a year.

75 years later, two veterans from Gold and Sword, George Batts and Cedric Wasser, describe their roles during this pivotal moment of history. Both were extremely young men in 1944 but they helped to free France and are still determined to ensure that the sacrifices of their comrades are never forgotten.



# THE SAPPER



**George Batts MBE landed at Gold Beach to ensure the safety of Allied troops by clearing German mines**

Gold was the central-most Allied beach. After the beachhead was secured, the British aim was to link up with the Americans at Omaha and Canadians at Juno while also capturing Bayeux. Soldiers began landing at 7.25am but high winds made disembarkation difficult. The British also came under attack from German

embrasure, emplacement and artillery fire, which resulted in over 1,000 casualties. Bayeux was not captured until the following day but Arromanches-les-Bains was taken and the British made contact with the Canadians.

Among the thousands of British troops who landed was Sapper George Batts of 1049 Port Operating Company, Royal Engineers. Batts was only 18 years old but he cleared mines in the vicinity of Gold for several days before working extensively on the beach's Mulberry harbour. After Normandy, Batts served in Belgium and the Far East where he helped to liberate Allied prisoners from Japanese POW camps.

In later years, Batts was heavily involved in the Normandy Veterans Association (NVA) and became its national secretary and treasurer. When the NVA disbanded in 2014, he was instrumental in founding the Normandy Memorial Trust (NMT) and secured government funding from the then Prime Minister David Cameron for an official memorial to the British

of D-Day and the Battle of Normandy. Now the recipient of an MBE and Légion d'honneur, Batts is the patron of the NMT along with Prince Charles. He describes wading ashore under fire, prodding mines with bayonets and his pride for the memorial he has achieved for his fallen comrades.

## GOING INTO THE UNKNOWN

**When did you join the British Army and how were you selected for the Royal Engineers?**

I volunteered on 18 March 1943. In those days all we youngsters wanted to do was to join up and be heroes. I wanted to get in the RAF but I'm colour-blind so I joined the army. I was interviewed by a colonel at an RE depot in Brighton where I said I wanted to be a Royal Engineer. This was because you became tradesmen in the RE and got a bit more money.

**What did your training involve?**

I volunteered for a special section without knowing what it was. It was actually an advanced commando course and I became an explosives expert. This was for all explosives and booby traps, including German, Italian and British mines. I hadn't left school long so I

**"MONTY CAME ROUND AND SPOKE TO US. HE TOLD US WE WERE GOING ON THE BIGGEST ADVENTURE OF OUR LIFE"**

*Royal Engineers clear mines from the main street of Tilly-sur-Seulles, 19 June 1944*



*British troops advance into Normandy, 6 June 1944. For all Allied troops, getting off the beaches as quickly as possible was a priority*





loved it. You were trained to defuse explosives, lay them and blow things up.

***When did you find out about the invasion?***

Virtually the day before. Everybody was mobilising so we knew we were going somewhere and guessed it would be France but we weren't sure until Monty came round and spoke to us. He told us we were going on the biggest adventure of our life.

***How did it feel to be part of Operation Overlord?***

As an 18 year old, you have mixed feelings. You're scared because you know the war had been going on for years and so you'd consequently think, "I could be killed." It's the first realisation you have of that. Apart from that, you're doing training and when you're 18 and pretty fit you enjoy it. However, all of a sudden you know you're going somewhere where people are going to fire at you and it will be real ammunition instead of blanks.

***Were you briefed before you crossed the English Channel?***

No, not really. Funnily enough, it was all supposed to be top secret and we went to

Newhaven in lorries but there were people cheering as we went through. They knew more than we did! To be fair, they could see all these troops and you've got to be an idiot not to realise something's going on when you see people getting on ships.

***What was your crossing like on an LSI (Landing Ship, Infantry)?***

We were on the ship for a while because D-Day was cancelled for 24 hours. It was rocking about a bit but the crossing wasn't too bad. I didn't get seasick but it was frightening because you were going into the unknown.

There was mostly bomber aircraft going over but there were still some paratroopers as well. That was one hell of a sight to see the gliders and planes. There were also silly jokes, giggles and leg-pulls onboard and at the time you laughed your head off. It was a real "nervous-twitch" type of thing.

## DISEMBARKATION

***What happened during your arrival off the Normandy coast?***

We got off the coast and the navy opened up. I'll never forget the noise and naval shells

were going over the top of our heads. We had a nervous inter-services joke, which was, "For Christ's sake, make sure they know what they're aiming at!"

We then went down the scrambling ropes into the assault craft and they were bobbing up and down about 18-20 feet in the swell. Just before I got over onto the ropes, two blokes slipped. They went between the landing craft and the ship and were squashed.

***What were your experiences of landing on Gold?***

We got down in the assault craft and when it was full it took off, went round in a circle, lined up and then into the beaches. There was no going back and you had to wait for the ramp to go down. You couldn't see anything beyond that and when the ramp went down somebody shouted for us to get off. I was up to my waist in water. A lot of people dropped into holes created by shells and were drowned because we had a lot of equipment.

The priority was to get off the beach and there was fog from so much artillery, rifles, machine guns and mortars. I landed at about 10.30am and there had been plenty of time to make a mess of the beach. It was pitted with





holes and God-knows-what and there was also a mist that was like a miniature pea souper. The Germans were doing the dirty and it was just a case of getting off as quickly as possible. There was one pillbox that wasn't put out of action until the early afternoon and they killed a lot of people. I was one of the lucky ones.

***Were you aware of the historical significance of what you were all doing?***

Yes, but the main thing was that we were highly trained. When the ramp goes down, you hit the beach and people are firing, your training takes over. You lost all sense of thinking except for what you were trained to do.

For most of us it was the only invasion we did. You don't know what you're going to do and when you're there its not really registering because of self-preservation. Being quite honest, unless you were involved in it, you can't believe it. Even when you are involved in it you sometimes get to a point afterwards where you don't believe it yourself. As you get older you think, "Did it happen?"

**MINES AND MULBERRY**

***Where were you clearing mines after you landed?***

We were clearing off the beach, which was better than being on it because you didn't get sand in your eyes. In some cases we were part of the advance or behind in the vicinity of Gold. The detecting equipment was useless because there was too much ordnance around so we were prodding for mines with bayonets.

It sounds incredible but we simply prodded and scraped. However, we'd spent months in training so it was second nature. You would scrape around, get rid of the sand very



*British troops disembark onto Gold Beach at Arromanches-les-Bains, 6 June 1944*

carefully, feel for the wire and clip it. The Germans had two or three types of mines but you got to know them. I was just a school kid really and it was exciting.

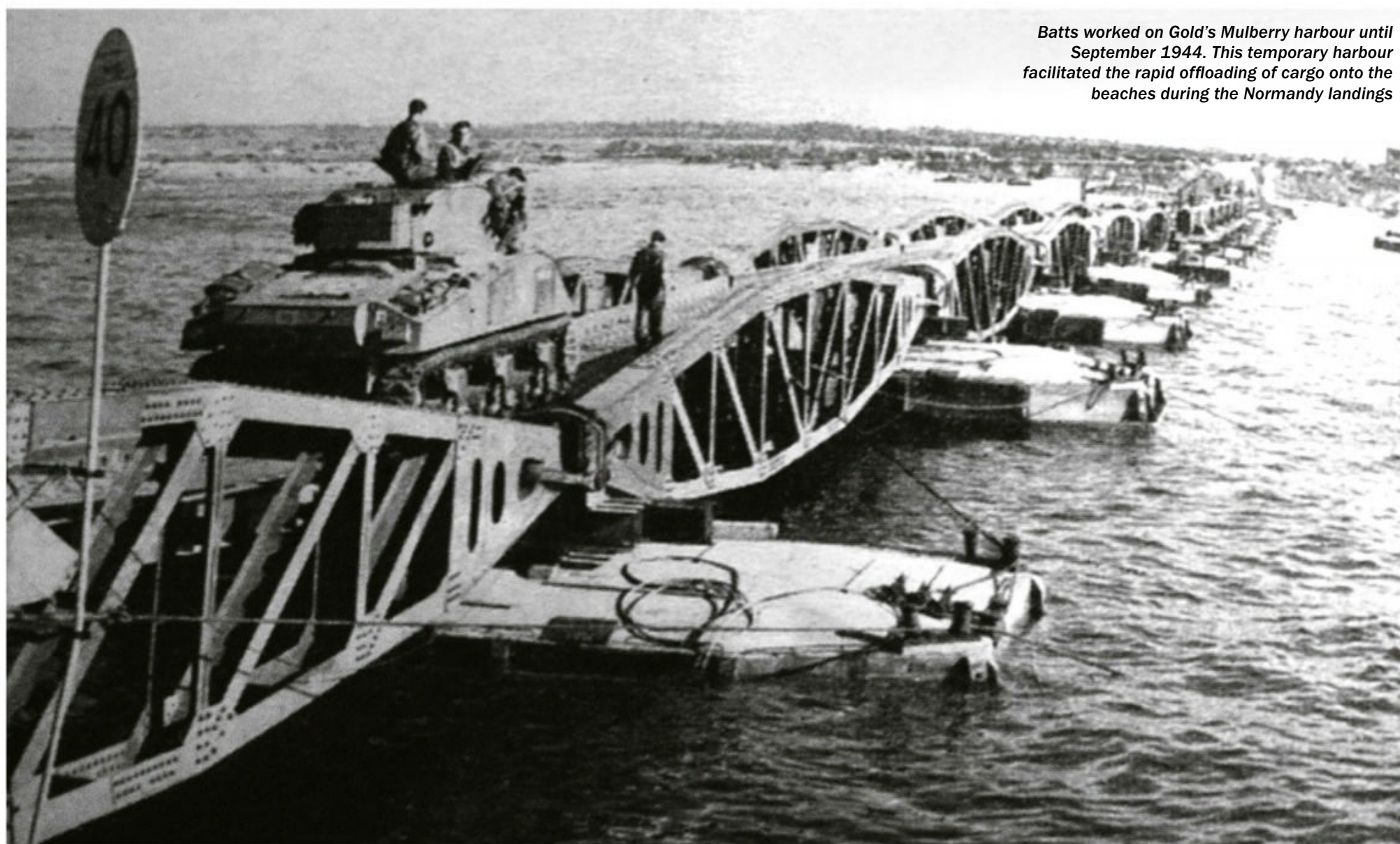
We did this for about three days because there was a big area to clear.

Some areas had active mines while others had none because the Germans just wanted to scare you. However, you couldn't take anything for granted. You had to prod all over the land because a few were killed when mines were detonated.

***After you cleared the mines, what were your tasks on Gold's Mulberry harbour?***

I was working on the harbour as soon as it opened. We unloaded ships in 12-hour shifts and it was bloody hard work but the harbour was an incredible thing. It's one of the most fantastic engineering feats and it all fitted together. However, at the time it was just a bloody nuisance because of the work!

We unloaded supplies and the thing that sticks in my mind were the Red Cross ships that took the injured back. After there had been



*Batts worked on Gold's Mulberry harbour until September 1944. This temporary harbour facilitated the rapid offloading of cargo onto the beaches during the Normandy landings*



some battles, such as Caen, the queues of ambulances coming up to the harbour were things I'll never forget. You used to see the wounded taken onto the ships and it was shocking. German POWs also departed from the harbour and that hurt because they were going to England while we were still stuck out there.

## **What dangers were you subjected to in Normandy in the subsequent months?**

The Germans tried to bomb Mulberry every night so the artillery would put up a bomb barrage. The anti-aircraft stuff went up but it had to come down and shrapnel would ping on the metal harbour.

How people were not hit I do not know. We would camp in an orchard and you could hear the shrapnel hitting the trees as it came down. Strangely enough, nobody was ever hit.

I also did a few guard duties at Arromanches and it was the most frightening thing. There were still a lot of German snipers around and the slightest noise made you aware. Because the lads were still fighting there was many a poor cow that got shot.

However, I was lucky being in the RE because I was on the Mulberry harbour for months and the fighting gradually moved away.

## **What was your opinion of the Germans?**

In general I think they were the same as us. The majority didn't want to fight any more than we did but you had the fanatics including the elite regiments and the Hitler Youth. The latter were absolute b\*\*\*\*\*ds but most were around 16 and who wants to kill a 16 year old?

## **Did you encounter other Allied troops?**

We used to see the Americans. They had great

big, automatic lorries and they'd be sitting there with the peaks turned up on their caps, usually a cigar stuck in their mouth and driving like maniacs. We did as we were told most of the time but they were gung-ho and always looked as if they were enjoying themselves.

## **How did the French receive the British?**

Most of them welcomed us but some hated us. Some of the French girls had had German boyfriends and if there was nobody else around then it was understandable. But one thing I'll never forget is when we moved towards Belgium.

There were some French Resistance who got hold of some of the girls who had been "collaborating" and they cut their hair off. We were going to stop them but some other Frenchmen said, "No, no. They kill." The Resistance would have killed us and we had to keep out of the way. It was a heartbreaking sight.

## **"DON'T ALLOW ANOTHER WAR"**

### **What made you decide to become involved with the NVA in later years?**

When I came out of the army I wasn't interested in joining anything. However, a great mate of mine called Len who I served with was ill and I visited him in hospital. He said, "Are you in the RE Association?" and I said that I wouldn't join a bloody thing. He said, "Well you're an idiot" and died a week later. My wife had also died and I wanted something to do. I thought of Len and joined the local branches of the RE Association and NVA. This was in 1996 and I eventually became the treasurer and secretary of the National NVA.

I'm so glad I joined and without it I don't think I'd be alive. It kept me going because there was

so much to do and places to go. For the 70th anniversary I was working about ten hours a day because as the secretary you're the focal point for all enquiries. The phone calls, emails and letters never stopped.

## **How does it feel now that the British will finally have an official memorial in Normandy?**

Absolutely incredible. A lot of people are saying that it should have been done years before. I was an ordinary little sapper but I got it going and got millions of pounds from the government. Generals, field marshals and big noises were saying it should have been done and they were in a better position than me to do it. However, I got it because I had a bit of cheek with the prime minister.

For me, it's obviously a dream come true and to think that its little me that got it, I'm very proud, particularly because nobody else had done it.

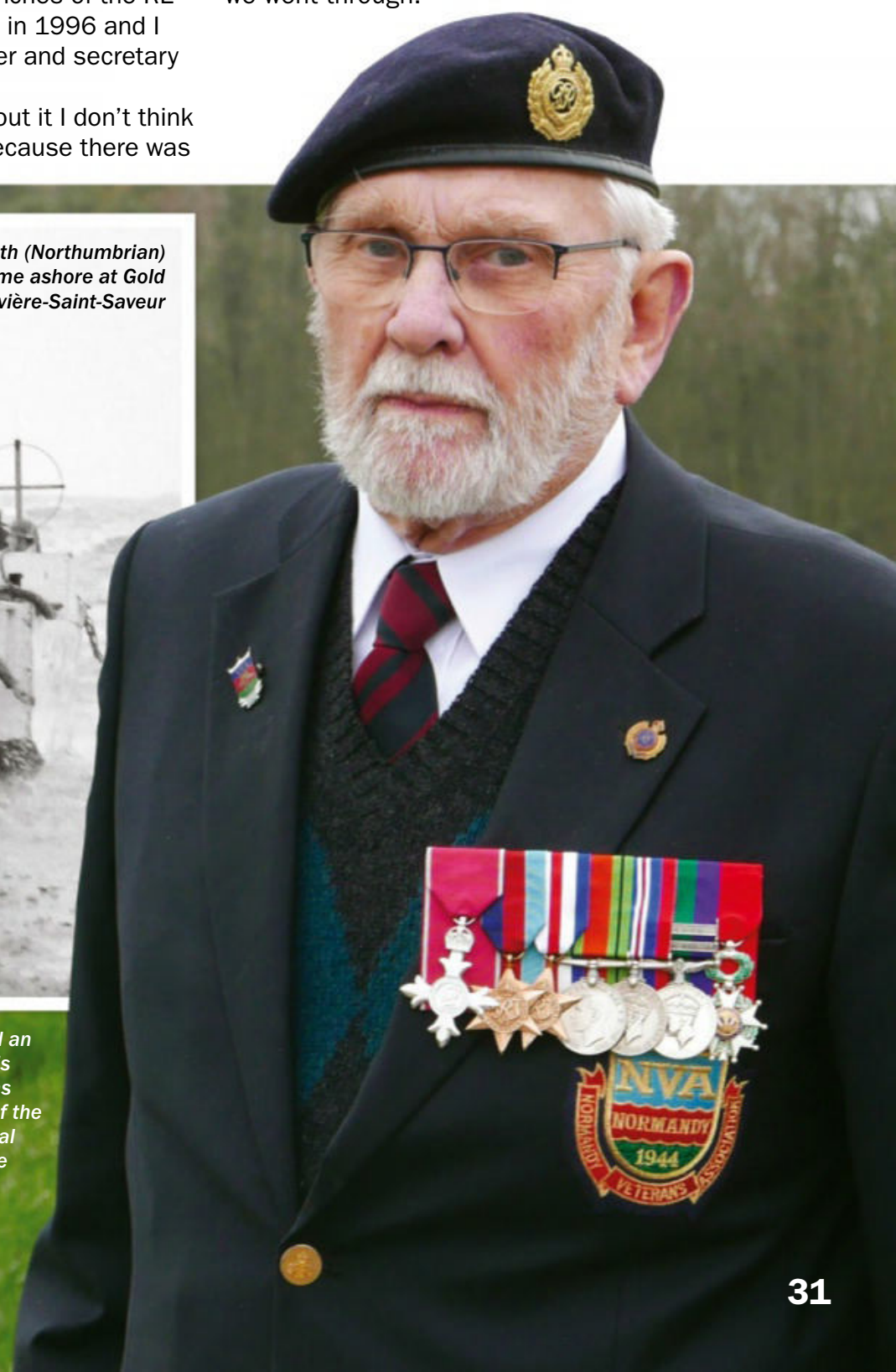
## **How important is it that D-Day and the Battle of Normandy are remembered?**

It's absolutely essential. I used to go to a lot of schools and the one thing I used to ram into the kids is that war is not funny and don't allow another war. That's still my feeling because what did the war prove? It got rid of the Germans but millions were killed. Is it worth millions of lives and disruption to topple a few people? There must be some other way and I don't want anybody to go through what we went through.



*Commandos of 50th (Northumbrian) Infantry Division come ashore at Gold near La Rivière-Saint-Saveur*

*Batts was awarded an MBE in 2015 for his services to veterans and is the patron of the Normandy Memorial Trust along with the Prince of Wales*





# COMMEMORATING BRITISH VETERANS

**The Royal British Legion and Normandy Memorial Trust are holding special events to honour the United Kingdom's contribution to D-Day**

For the 75th anniversary of the D-Day landings, the Royal British Legion and Normandy Memorial Trust are ensuring that the veterans and fallen of the Normandy Campaign are suitably honoured.

As Britain's leading armed forces charity, the British Legion is taking up to 300 D-Day veterans on a specially chartered ship to mark the anniversary of 6 June 1944. The voyage will take veterans to a series of commemorative events

in the UK and France at no cost to themselves. Between 2-8 June 2019, veterans will sail on MV Boudicca to France via Dover, Poole, and Portsmouth before arriving at Le Havre for events in Normandy between 6-7 June. There will also be a D-Day 75 Commemoration Event at the National Memorial Arboretum in Staffordshire on 6 June for veterans unable to travel on the ship.

There is also going to be a special inauguration of a new British Normandy Memorial at Ver-sur-Mer, courtesy of the Normandy Memorial Trust. At the instigation of veteran George Batts MBE, the NMT has secured a government commitment to construct a powerful and inspiring statement to honour the British fallen from the Battle of Normandy.

Designed by architect Liam O'Connor, the memorial's inauguration will take place on 6 June 2019. It is expected that the British prime minister and president of France will attend the ceremony. A foundation stone will be laid and a commissioned 'D-Day Sculpture' will be unveiled.

The inauguration is a ticketed event for invited guests including a number of Normandy veterans who have been involved in the project. Live footage will be streamed to the British Legion facility for other veterans and their families. The main service of remembrance itself will take place at Bayeux Cathedral at 10.00am on 6 June followed by another service at the city's Commonwealth War Graves Commission cemetery.

**“AT THE INSTIGATION OF VETERAN GEORGE BATTS MBE, THE NMT HAS SECURED A GOVERNMENT COMMITMENT TO CONSTRUCT A POWERFUL AND INSPIRING STATEMENT TO HONOUR THE BRITISH FALLEN FROM THE BATTLE OF NORMANDY”**





An artist's impression of the British Normandy Memorial from the southeast. The memorial will overlook Gold Beach



THE ROYAL BRITISH  
LEGION



FOR MORE INFORMATION ON THE BRITISH LEGION'S  
D-DAY 75 EVENTS VISIT: [WWW.BRITISHLEGION.ORG.UK](http://WWW.BRITISHLEGION.ORG.UK)



FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT THE NORMANDY MEMORIAL  
TRUST VISIT: [WWW.NORMANDYMEMORIALTRUST.ORG](http://WWW.NORMANDYMEMORIALTRUST.ORG)

An artist's impression of the commissioned British Normandy Memorial at Ver-sur-Mer





# THE CRAFTSMAN



**Cedric Wasser landed at Sword Beach to repair the vehicles that pushed the invasion forward**

Sword was the easternmost beach on D-Day and stretched from Saint-Aubin-sur-Mer to Ouistreham. It was also the nearest beach to Caen and the responsibility for storming the sands fell to the British 3rd Infantry Division.

The invading forces landed at 7.25am on 6 June against relatively light German defences and by 8.00am the fighting was mostly occurring inland. At 1.00pm, commandos from Sword achieved their objective of linking up with airborne troops but the British were unable to join Canadian forces from Juno Beach thanks to German counterattacks.

Twenty-year-old Cedric Wasser was one of those who landed at Sword. A craftsman in the Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers (REME), Wasser's unit was attached to 7th Field Regiment, Royal Artillery. Like Batts, D-Day was Wasser's first experience of combat and after being driven off the beach, he was tasked with repairing the light vehicles that enabled the Allied advance. Despite operating behind the Front Line, Wasser conducted his repair work under the constant threat of artillery fire for weeks. Now a recipient of the Légion d'honneur, he recalls watching a German pillbox explode, avoiding shellfire and taking risks to check on his friends.

## JOINING THE REME

### **When did you join the British Army?**

I enlisted on my birthday, which was 10 February 1942 and went into service on 12 March. I volunteered because there was a scheme where volunteers could choose which branch of the army they wanted to serve in. I had the option of the Royal Engineers, Royal

Army Ordnance Corps or the Royal Artillery. With the Engineers I could only think of mines and barbed wire, which didn't appeal to me. I wanted to go into the RAOC but the interviewing officer said, "I'm sorry, but you haven't got the right qualifications," so that left me with the artillery.

I joined that and started as a driver mechanic. I was interviewed again and put into a course with the Royal Corps of Signals before I was reassigned to the REME. I did courses in Leicester and Birmingham before I was sent to Croydon where I passed the exams. We were then allocated for postings and the chap with the lists said, "We're going to post you as near to your home as possible." However, they posted me to Dumfries! I've never forgiven him for that but it was all good experience.

### **What training did you do for amphibious landings?**

We spent two or three months near Dumfries where I was allocated to the 3rd Infantry Division and attached to the 7th Field Artillery. We were moved further north to Fort George where we learned to waterproof vehicles and do whatever was necessary to get the vehicles in decent shape for the invasion.

In about May 1944, we were sent down all the way from Scotland to near Brighton in a long convoy. There was a wooded area on the London-Brighton road and we were camped there doing final preparations. On 1 June we were motored down to Gosport to board LST (Landing Ship, Tank) 302. We were sitting around for a few days and on 5 June the invasion was postponed for 24 hours because of the weather conditions.

## LANDING ON SWORD

### **What did you know about the invasion of France?**

I don't think we were told anything until we got down into the south of England but the fact that we were waterproofing vehicles was a sign that an invasion was going to take place. It was one big question mark really, particularly with not

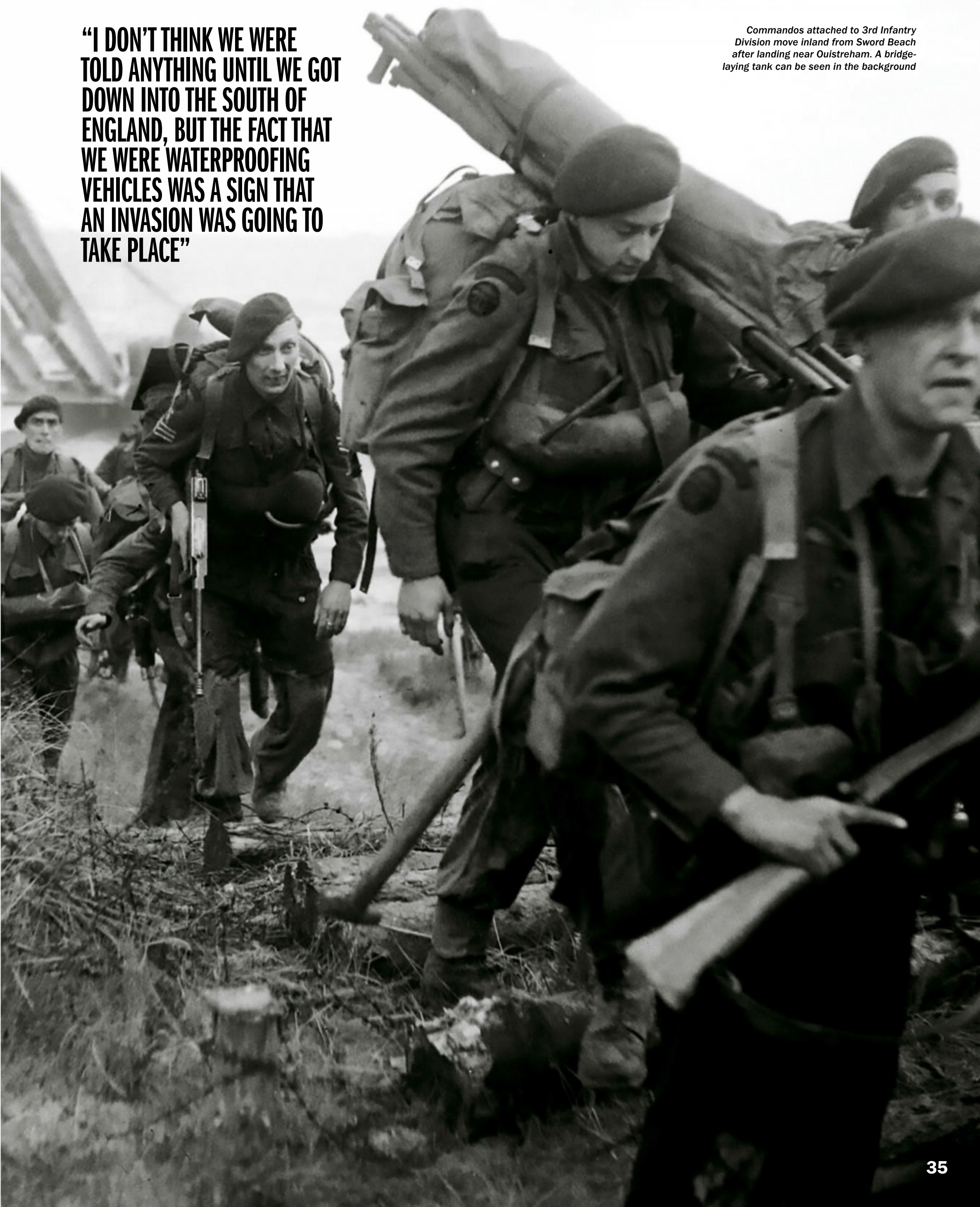


*British troops prepare to move into the Normandy countryside. Wasser would repair light vehicles such as the pictured motorcycle*



**“I DON’T THINK WE WERE TOLD ANYTHING UNTIL WE GOT DOWN INTO THE SOUTH OF ENGLAND, BUT THE FACT THAT WE WERE WATERPROOFING VEHICLES WAS A SIGN THAT AN INVASION WAS GOING TO TAKE PLACE”**

*Commandos attached to 3rd Infantry Division move inland from Sword Beach after landing near Ouistreham. A bridge-laying tank can be seen in the background*





knowing exactly how we were going to land and what opposition there was going to be. I was in the second wave to land on Sword Beach so thankfully I wasn't involved in the initial assault.

***What was the crossing like across the English Channel?***

We had hammocks to sleep in because we were onboard three or four days prior to the invasion. There was also an area in the channel called "Piccadilly Circus" where all the convoys of ships assembled. The crossing itself was a bit choppy and seasickness pills were distributed. They were very useful!

***What happened when LST 302 approached Sword Beach?***

We were due to land at about 10am but a lone German plane came across and dropped a bomb. Fortunately it missed our ship but the vibration of the explosion put the lift mechanism on the LST out of action. On the upper deck there were Jeeps and heavy vehicles while on the lower deck there were Sherman tanks etc.

**“WE KNEW WHAT WAS GOING ON BUT OUR THOUGHTS WERE VERY “LOCAL” IN THE SENSE THAT WE WERE ALL LOOKING OUT FOR “NUMBER ONE” AND TRYING TO SURVIVE”**

The tanks got off alright but we couldn't get our vehicles down because of the broken lift. We had to wait for an hour or so before another LST came alongside and the ship's crews put wooden planks between the vessels. We had to drive our vehicles across these planks onto that ship and we hadn't even landed! We then went down on their lift and discharged onto a "Rhino", which was a huge floating platform made of steel cubes that were welded together. The Rhinos had motors and they took us to the beach from just offshore.

***What could you see on the beach as you were waiting to land?***

The battle was raging a bit inland by that time although I saw a German pillbox blow up. There

was a machine gun in it and it was causing trouble across the beach. I was watching high up from the top of this LST and it was like a grandstand view. After a few minutes a naval shell was directed towards this pillbox and it was blown into pieces. It went up with some force because a naval shell can do a lot of damage.

***What happened when you finally landed on Sword?***

We got onto this Rhino and I was in a 1,500-weight vehicle that drove onto the beach. We were then driven through the town of Lion-sur-Mer, which was the nearest settlement to where we landed. We were pretty much taken off Sword Beach and my feet never touched the sand because I was in the vehicle. Any

*Soldiers of the Suffolk Regiment come under heavy fire while waiting to move off the 'Queen' section of Sword on the morning of 6 June*





congestion that had been caused by the first wave had seemingly been cleared so it was relatively easy to get off. There was no more congestion and it was relatively efficient.

***Were you aware of the importance of D-Day at the time?***

Yes, but I don't think we gave much thought as to what was happening elsewhere. We knew what was going on but our thoughts were very "local" in the sense that we were all looking out for "Number One" and trying to survive.

**REPAIRING UNDER FIRE**

***Where were you based in Normandy after the landing?***

We were escorted off Sword Beach and went to Hermanville-sur-Mer where I spent a night under the stars. There were German planes about even then, because they would drop anti-personnel bombs among us. We survived that and then on 7 June we were directed to a village called Périers-sur-le-Dan. We had to dig trenches at the church and cemetery and

managed to fit bits of timber to cover the top. We were there for five weeks and during this time there were exchanges between the German and British artillery. The shells would whizz over the top of us with some of them landing in the field just beyond. One of the shells landed closer than that and killed one of my friends. We were there until there was the big bomber raid on Caen. It was August by then but it was liberated and troops were able to go in.

***What was your specific task during the campaign?***

I repaired vehicles. Information would come through to the command post and there were about 12-13 of us in the Light Aid Detachment. If repairs were required, I would be detailed to go and fix vehicles like trucks and motorbikes although I didn't have much to do with tanks. This was because the tanks were very complicated things and if anything went wrong they would need to be repaired in a workshop. On the other hand, a motorbike is relatively easy to repair.

***What were working conditions like?***

During those five weeks in Normandy I was transferred to the 20th Anti-Tank Regiment. I was very sad because I'd got all my colleagues who I'd trained and landed with. However, I was able to borrow an NCO's motorbike and used it to visit my friends who were not too far away. I was fortunate that I wasn't shot up! I was at risk but it didn't occur to me because I was desperate to check up on my pals. There was a great sense of camaraderie.

Overall, our experiences were very localised and we were not aware of what was going on at Sword once we were inland. The officer in charge would give us a pep talk each day. He would get maps out to put us in the picture as to what was going to, hopefully, happen but I don't remember being told about the Mulberry harbours or the undersea pipeline called "Pluto". We just wanted to keep safe and avoid any trouble if possible.

However, with the shells going across we were always in danger of being hit by them dropping short of their target, which was a bit





worrying. There was always a possibility of German shells landing amongst us in all the time I was in France and the Low Countries.

For example, there was one occasion when our breakdown vehicle had a direct hit in the churchyard and it was put out of action. When we moved out of the cemetery we went to an area near Troarn where we had a replacement vehicle. We had to dig a huge hole in the ground to half-bury it so it was protected from artillery fire.

#### **What happened when you left Normandy?**

We eventually moved out of the area up towards Belgium before we moved into Holland. Operation Market Garden was taking place although we were not directly involved. However, we were able to witness some of the battles at Nijmegen Bridge. Thankfully that operation ended and we were able to go into Germany.

I ended up in a little town called Buren. The battles were still going on further into Germany but our detachment was sent back to Belgium. While we were in Buren I wanted some exposed camera film developed in the local chemists. For safety's sake I used the name "Waters" instead of Wasser because my surname is German. My forebears came to Britain from Germany in the early 1800s but I didn't want to open myself up to any retaliation from this chemist in case he thought I was a German!

It was on a Belgian airstrip that we heard that the cessation of hostilities had taken place. Everybody was relieved and we were looking forward to going home so it was a bit of shock to be told that we had to go back to the continent after a week.

We were then flown to Cairo via Libya to pick up new vehicles and equipment and went on a long convoy through the Sinai Desert to Palestine. We were on the outskirts of Jerusalem before we moved down to the Suez Canal. There was an ex-RAF aerodrome there and it was actually quite pleasant. In December 1946 we went back to Dover where I was demobbed. I was home on 12 December, which was just in time for Christmas. I was quite well travelled by then!



*An American B-26 Marauder returns to its UK base while flying over the British landings at Sword, 6 June 1944*

### **AN IMPORTANT COMMEMORATION**

#### **How did it feel to be awarded the Légion d'honneur by the French government in 2015?**

It was very nice. We heard that this medal was being distributed and we were told how to get hold of a form. I filled it in and just waited. The next thing I knew I had a letter from the French consulate in Birmingham asking if I would attend Rugby Town Hall for a presentation, which turned out to be my birthday.

I was allowed to bring a dozen friends with me and I was at a bit of a loss as to what to say apart from "Thank you very much"! I hadn't prepared anything but I said a few words and thanked the mayor and councillors. It was a bit emotional and certainly a highlight of my year.

#### **How does it feel to be attending the British Legion's 'D-Day 75 Voyage' to Normandy for veterans this year?**

I'm looking forward to it very much. I was surprised when I

learnt the extent of the commemorations and it's a very complicated piece of organisation. Nevertheless, it has been well organised and is very significant.

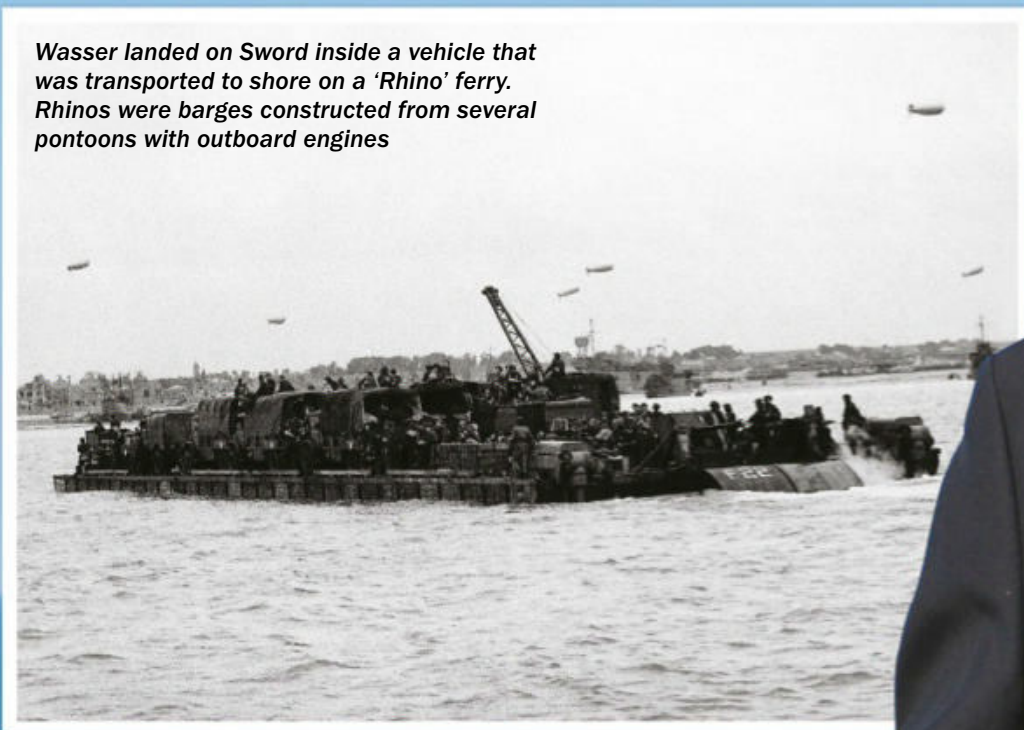
I'm particularly looking forward to the first evening because the singing group 'The D-Day Darlings' will be performing for the veterans. I've seen them on YouTube and it'd be lovely to see them in person.

#### **How important is it that the events of D-Day and the Battle of Normandy are remembered after 75 years?**

There certainly won't be any veterans left for the 100th anniversary and so I think this particular commemoration is very important.

A lot hung on the invasion and if it had failed we might not be sitting here now talking. It was highly important and significant and so I think it is right and proper that it is being recognised and commemorated.

*Wasser landed on Sword inside a vehicle that was transported to shore on a 'Rhino' ferry. Rhinos were barges constructed from several pontoons with outboard engines*



*Cedric Wasser pictured overlooking Omaha Beach, 23 April 2017*



Images: Alamy, George Batts, Big Wave PR, Getty, Liam O'Connor Architects, Normandy Memorial Trust, Cedric Wasser



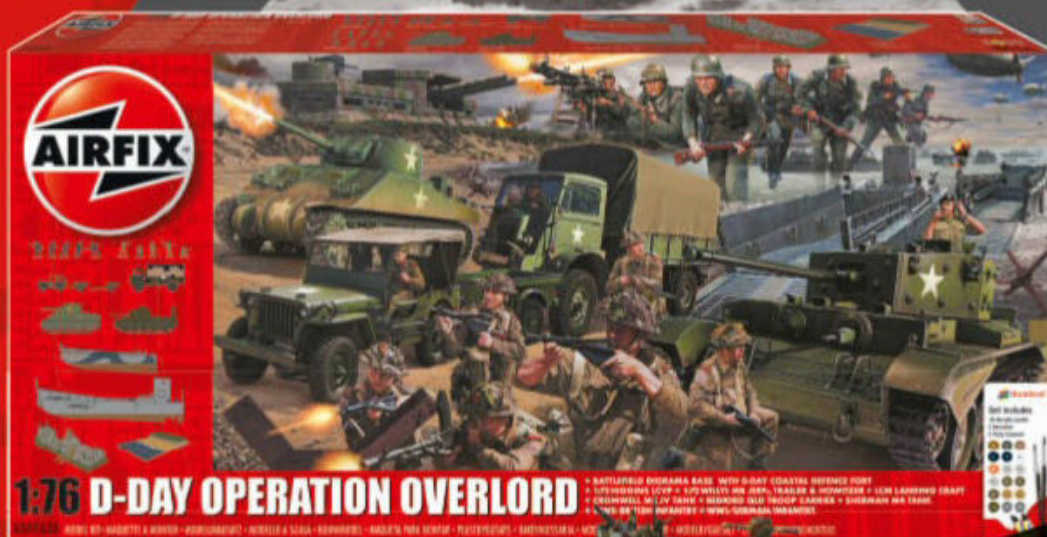


# THE 75TH ANNIVERSARY OF D-DAY

## D-Day Gift Sets

These sets illustrate different stages during Operation Overlord and all of these come with vac-form bases to create the perfect diorama. Most of the models included in each of these sets are also available to purchase individually.

### A50162A D-DAY OPERATION OVERLORD



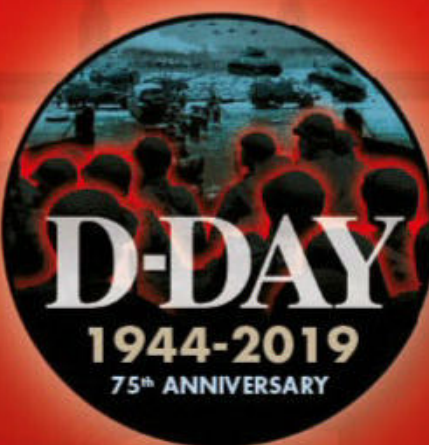
### A5009A D-DAY BATTLEFRONT



### A50156A D-DAY SEA ASSAULT



### A50157A D-DAY AIR ASSAULT



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# AIR POWER

## AND THE BATTLE FOR NORMANDY

WORDS JAMES HOLLAND

**Operation Overlord was only possible once total air superiority over northern France had been achieved. James Holland describes how Allied airmen were able to gain the upper hand over their enemy, and how critical bombing campaigns destroyed the German ability to defend Fortress Europe**

**O**n Monday, 22 May 1944, 16 P-47 Thunderbolt fighter planes of the 61st Fighter Squadron were speeding towards the north German city of Bremen led by Lieutenant-Colonel Francis “Gaby” Gabreski, one of the originals of Colonel Hub Zemke’s 56th Fighter Group, and by now, among the most experienced fighter pilots in the US Eighth Air Force.

Having helped escort just under 300 B-17 Flying Fortress heavy bombers on an attack on the Baltic port of Kiel, their role now was to maraud the skies of northern Germany, shooting down any enemy planes they might see and

especially target locomotives on the ground. This intensive train-smashing operation, begun the previous day, had been given the codename Chattanooga Choo Choo, after the famous song. A jaunty and jolly jingle it might have been, but the business of shooting up locomotives was a deadly serious one. The German railway network, the Reichsbahn, really was the glue that kept the German war effort together. Almost everything travelled the shrinking Reich by rail: raw materials, weapons, labour, troops, food, Jews being sent to death camps.

The more marshalling yards that were smashed, the more locomotives shot up, the more railway bridges destroyed and lines cut, the

harder it would be for the Germans to move and reinforce the battlefield once the invasion began.

Gabreski’s squadron of 16 was around 20 miles east of the city when a couple of locomotives were spotted. With their clouds of white steam they were easy enough to spot on a lovely clear day in May. The squadron had barely begun circling when Gabreski spotted a not very well camouflaged air base below. Gabreski felt the now familiar surge of excitement as he led the squadron down to attack. The Thunderbolt was a big fighter that was unrivalled in a dive. Armed with .50 calibre machine-guns it could pack a big punch, take a lot of punishment itself and was



**“THEIR ROLE NOW WAS TO MARAUD  
THE SKIES OF NORTHERN GERMANY  
SHOOTING DOWN ANY ENEMY PLANES  
THEY MIGHT SEE AND ESPECIALLY  
LOCOMOTIVES ON THE GROUND”**

*American planes  
conducting recon sorties  
over Normandy, France,  
in preparation for the  
Normandy invasion*

*P-51 Mustangs flying  
to German targets*

*Portrait of American  
Lieutenant Colonel Francis S.  
Gabreski as he sits in cockpit  
of his P-47 Thunderbolt*



# AIR POWER AND THE BATTLE FOR NORMANDY

highly manoeuvrable too. More to the point, by May 1944, American fighter pilots were in a different league to those in the Luftwaffe in terms of flying skill. Most new pilots joined their squadrons with more than three times the flying hours of a German fighter pilot and because of the plentiful amounts of fuel and the large pilot overlap in each squadron – usually over 50 to keep 16 planes flying per mission – there was a lot of time to then further practice and hone skills with those who had more experience. Because of the chronic shortages of fuel, new Luftwaffe fighter pilots tended to fly on missions only. Most were promptly shot down.

That was about to be the fate of a number of FW 190s now. As Gabreski and his men hurtled towards them, he saw around 16 of them spread out in line abreast. The enemy fighters were now at a height where they could have turned and fought, but they seemed oblivious to what was happening and instead flew on in steady formation, presenting themselves as juicy targets for the P-47s.

Picking out one, Gabreski opened fire and saw his bullets flash all over the German's fuselage and wing. It turned and fell away then burst into flames.

Now Gabreski got behind a second and closing in opened fire a second time. This time the canopy flew off and moments later, the pilot bailed out. So that was two. Soon after, he had a third.

In all, Gabreski and his men shot down 13 confirmed, one probable and two damaged that day for the loss of two of their own, his squadron demonstrating the dominance the American day fighters had over the Luftwaffe in the west. Just over two weeks before the invasion, that was good news. Just as good was the other hunting that day by Zemke's fighter group: six locomotives destroyed, seven damaged, as well as 18 river barges shot up. Chatanooga Choo Choo was going well.

There was further cause for cheer just under a week later on Sunday 28 May, a day that saw the culmination of what was in effect a five-month battle in the skies for air superiority over northwest Europe. Some 78 German fighters were shot out of the sky that day, the closest of which was more than 500 miles from the planned invasion front. The Luftwaffe might not have been destroyed, but they'd been pushed back deep into Germany, giving the Allies virtual free-reign over all of France and northwest Europe – one of the non-negotiable pre-conditions for the invasion that had been uppermost in the Allied war leaders' minds since the previous summer.

## Materiel superiority

Air power had always been absolutely central to Britain and America's war strategy and particularly so with the planned Operation Overlord, the invasion of Normandy. The Allies

were fighting big war – industry, technologically and mechanically heavy in which 'steel not flesh' was the mantra. Broadly speaking, it was a very effective strategy too and one in which the number of men fighting at the coal face of war was kept to minimum. It still meant sending far too many young men into the firing line but nothing like as many as those of the other major combatant nations in the war.

It was also recognised, however, that a cross-channel invasion of Normandy was inconceivable unless the Allies had air superiority and not just over the invasion beaches but over much of France and northwest Europe.

This was because although the Allies had significantly greater materiel superiority over the Germans, they only had the shipping to bring over a fraction of those men, guns and tanks and all that was needed for fighting a sustained battle in one go. Yet the moment they landed, the race would be on to see which side could bring to bear the most – and decisive number – of forces into the bridgehead. Air power was to make up for the shortfall in shipping by slowing German reinforcements reaching the front. Since the Reichbahn kept Germany fighting and was the prime means of moving men and materiel any distances, the more railway marshalling yards, locomotives, rolling stock and bridges that could be destroyed before the invasion, the





better. Once the Allies had made a successful lodgement and won the race for the build-up of troops, they would be sure to win the battle for Normandy – and then the rest of France and western Europe.

Successfully hitting these targets, however, was dependent on securing air superiority first. Smaller targets, such as bridges, railways and locomotives could only be effectively hit by attacking at low altitudes and with a combination of twin-engine medium bombers and single-engine fighter-bombers. These in turn could only operate successfully if the skies above them were clear of enemy fighters, although the efficiency of the heavies, operating at higher altitudes, was also far greater when largely clear of marauding Messerschmitts and Focke-Wulfs. In fact, anti-aircraft guns had only a 0.002 per cent chance of hitting a target. It was estimated that it took 5,000 light flak shells and 3,500 heavy anti-aircraft rounds to shoot down a single Allied bomber. Unquestionably, the biggest threat to Allied bombers was enemy fighter aircraft.

The Allies had formally agreed that destroying the Luftwaffe should be their number one strategic air aim the previous June 1943. Operation Pointblank directed Allied air forces to destroy the German aircraft industry by heavy bombing and by shooting down enemy fighters. Unfortunately for both the American daylight and British night time bombing

## **“ONCE THE ALLIES HAD MADE A SUCCESSFUL LODGEMENT AND WON THE RACE FOR THE BUILD-UP OF TROOPS, THEY WOULD BE SURE TO WIN THE BATTLE FOR NORMANDY – AND THEN THE REST OF FRANCE AND WESTERN EUROPE”**

campaigns most German aircraft factories and assembly plants were deep in the Reich beyond fighter protection and Pointblank coincided with a complete overhaul of the German air defence system as well as markedly increased production figures for fighter aircraft. Something near panic befell the Allied air commanders in the autumn of 1943 as bombers were being shot down in droves with no sign of clearing the skies. The clock was ticking irrevocably towards D-Day but a concentrated air assault in the third week of February, known as Big Week, combined with the arrival of the superb long-range P-51 Mustang fighters in growing numbers, ensured that the necessary air

superiority had been gained by early April 1944. And although the German aircraft industry was still churning out Messerschmitts and Focke-Wulfs, the number of experienced pilots was being increasingly whittled away while new boys had become lambs to the slaughter.

With air superiority secured, the Supreme Allied Commander for Overlord, General Dwight D. Eisenhower, was able to take overall command of the air forces and directed them to carry about first the Transportation Plan, targeting bridges, marshalling yards and the German communications network, as well as the Oil Plan, in which the heavies of the Allied strategic air forces would strike at oil and synthetic fuel plants. Much of the Transportation Plan, however, would be focused on France as well as marshalling yards in western Germany, and there were major concerns about civilian loss of life.

“Considering that they are all our friends,” Churchill wrote to Eisenhower on 3 April, “this might be held to be an act of very great severity, bringing much hatred on the Allied Air Forces.” After discussions with Tedder, Eisenhower replied two days later, pointing out that one of the prime factors in the decision to launch the invasion was the use of overwhelming air power. “I and my military advisors have become convinced that the bombing of these centers will increase our chances for success in the critical battle,” he

*US Air Force P-47 Thunderbolts flying over Omaha beach during the invasion of Normandy, 6 June 1944. Watercolour by Ogden Pleissner*





wrote and added that he believed estimates of civilian casualties, some as high as 160,000, had been massively exaggerated – as was to prove the case. “The French people are now slaves,” he told Churchill. “Only a successful Overlord can free them. No one has a greater stake in the success of that operation than have the French.” Everything would be done to avoid loss of life, but he felt very strongly that it would be “sheer folly” to overlook any operation that would dramatically improve the chances of success of the invasion.

At the beginning of April 1944, despite the huge material superiority of the Allies, the cross-channel invasion, all the way from southern England to Normandy, still looked an immensely difficult and fraught operation indeed. For Eisenhower, as Supreme Allied Commander, the most senior military officer for the entire operation, Overlord was in no regard a foregone conclusion. It is difficult to imagine the oppressive burden of responsibility resting on his shoulders.

While Spaatz sent his heavies in Italy to bomb the oilfields at Ploesti in Romania, bombers from the Eighth and Bomber Command struck at marshalling yards and even bridges over the Seine and Meuse rivers. At the same time, bombers and fighters from the tactical air forces continued to destroy further

### **“BY THE BEGINNING OF JUNE, 76 OF THE 94 RADAR STATIONS ALONG THE FRENCH COAST HAD BEEN KNOCKED OUT COMPLETELY”**

bridges, railway lines and any sign of enemy movement all across France and the Low Countries. Any targets across this large swathe of western Europe were potentially helpful to Overlord while at the same time contributing to keeping the enemy guessing as to where the invasion would actually come. So it had gone on, night after night, day after day. Also hit were gun emplacements and radar stations all along the Atlantic Wall.

In 1940, the Luftwaffe had failed to heavily target Britain's radar chain and had paid the price. In 1944, the Allies were making no such mistakes. Rocket-firing Hawker Typhoons of the RAF's 2nd Tactical Air Force were particularly effective at this. By the beginning of June, 76 of the 94 radar stations along the French coast had been knocked out completely and the effectiveness of the German radar chain

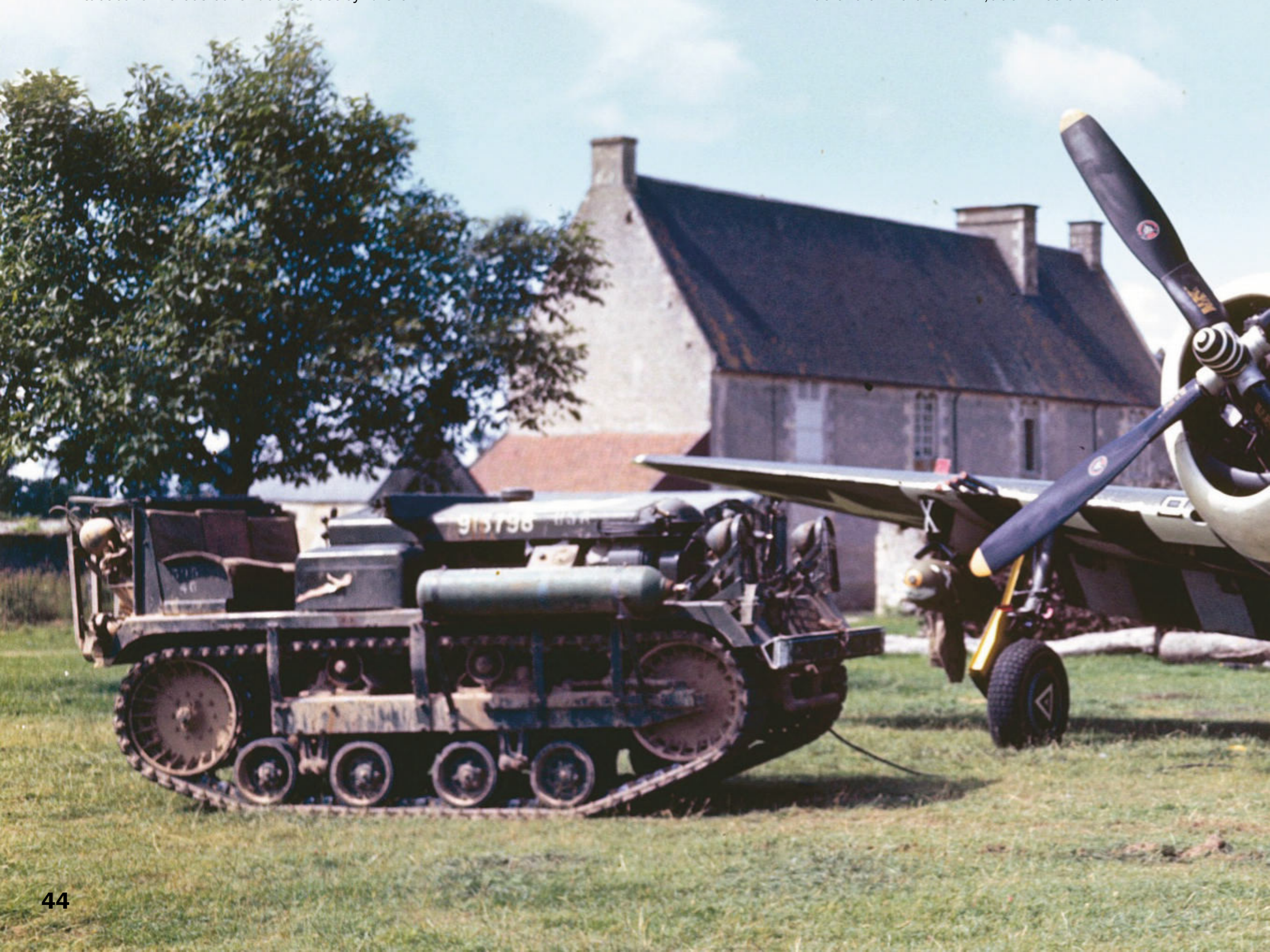
reduced to just five per cent efficiency. It was a vital part in ensuring the time and location of the invasion remained secret to the last.

In all, over the nine weeks leading up to D-Day, the Allied air forces dropped some 197,000 tons of bombs on France alone. To put this in perspective, during the entire Blitz between September 1940 and May 1941, the Luftwaffe dropped just 18,000 tons of bombs on London.

### **Readying for D-Day**

At around 12.30am on 6 June 1944, the B-17 Flying Fortress crews of the 91st Bomb Group at Basingbourn were being woken and told to get ready for a mission. “Maybe this is D-Day,” said Lieutenant Bert Stiles to his fellow officers in his Quonset hut, as they all grumbled and reluctantly pulled themselves out of bed. No-one laughed or even replied. It had been said so often over the past few weeks they'd all given up on the big day ever arriving. But it was finally the day. At breakfast in the mess hall, they were told they would be shortly heading to Normandy. “D-Day,” Stiles muttered. “Honest to God.”

Elsewhere in England, airfields were getting ready for the invasion. Stiles and his crew would be flying their heavy four-engine bomber as one of more than 12,000 Allied aircraft





operating on D-Day. Back in the summer of 1940, the Luftwaffe had rarely sent over more than a few hundred aircraft to assault Britain. Among the Allied air forces were transport fleets delivering three divisions of US, British and Canadian airborne troops, as well as heavy bombers from the US Eighth Air Force and RAF Bomber Command, medium bombers of the US Ninth Air Force and the RAF's 2nd Tactical Air Force, as well as thousands of fighters. The bombers would play an important role in hitting coastal defences, while the fighters would provide top cover protection and maraud inland. Many flew multiple times – Gaby Gabreski flew three trips, for example. Barely a Luftwaffe aircraft was to be seen, the Allies were certainly masters of the skies on D-Day.

In the run up to D-Day, Allied air forces had to strike far and wide in order to keep the Germans guessing about where exactly the invasion would come. Now, though, the cat was out of the bag, and so they could focus their efforts on the bridgehead and on making the movement of German reinforcements to the front as fraught as possible.

In the days that followed, it was the Allied air forces that ensured the Allies won the race for the build-up of the bridgehead. German units quickly discovered they could no longer safely move a muscle by daylight. General Erich

Marcks, the highly experienced commander of the German LXXXIV Corps, was killed when his car was shot up by Spitfires. The HQ of Panzergruppe West was also discovered and bombed, killing a number of senior staff officers, while the lives of the panzer divisions moving up to the Normandy front was also made a misery. Later, on 17 July, Rommel himself would be critically wounded by Spitfires while speeding in daylight in his staff car. The Panzer Lehr, arguably the best trained and equipped division in the Wehrmacht, was harried all the way from Le Mans. "The section between Caumont and Villers-Canivet Bocage," said Captain Alexander Hartdegen, "was the road of death. Sitting along the road were burnt-out track and bombed field kitchens and gun tractors, some still smouldering, the dead lying beside them. This horrible scene was the backdrop to our journey."

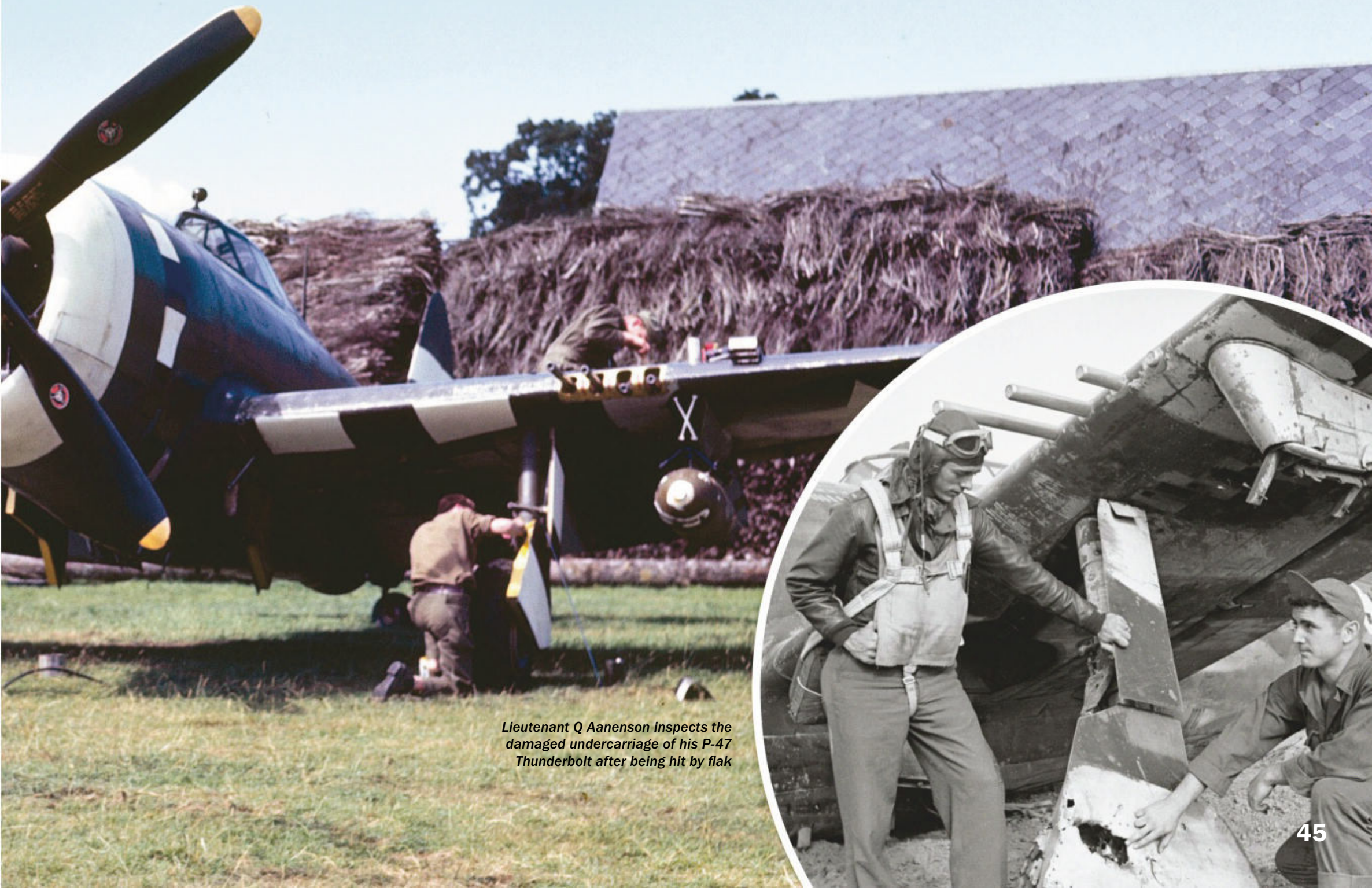
Read any letters, diaries or memoirs of German veterans, and the threat and fear of the dreaded Jabos – Allied fighter bombers – is a constant theme and one that ground down morale and severely hampered their freedom to move, and with it, their ability to fight effectively. Only poor weather saved them, but that then brought its own miseries. German tank crews were trained to be mobile but now found themselves camouflaged in

woods or amidst hedgerows during the day, barely daring to move. "This was a never-before experienced extremely difficult burden," noted Obersturmführer Hans Siegel of the 12 SS Panzer Division. "Always on the look-out, not speaking to anyone. The crews were isolated, not knowing what was happening elsewhere."

By Thursday, 15 June 1944, five airfields had been built in Normandy and in the next five days a further seven would follow. It was, by any reckoning, an astonishing achievement of organisation and engineering; the very first had been all but finished on 7 June behind Omaha Beach. Squadron Leader Tom Neil, a Battle of Britain veteran and attached to the Ninth Air Force had landed in his Mustang that evening. More airfields were being hastily cleared, graded and laid with pierce-steel-plating by the day, which meant ever more numbers of fighter-bombers could avoid flying back to England and so spend more time over the battle area.

Heavy strategic bombers continued to be used as well. Such forces were not designed to directly support ground operations and it did not always work well. The medieval city of Caen, for example, was largely destroyed by Bomber Command for little obvious benefit. On the other hand, when over 2,000 bombers pummelled German positions at the start of the British Operation Goodwood, their concentrated bomb

*An American P-47 Thunderbolt receives some maintenance at a makeshift airfield in the French countryside*



*Lieutenant Q Aanenson inspects the damaged undercarriage of his P-47 Thunderbolt after being hit by flak*



patterns hit the enemy positions hard. They did again at the start of the American Operation Cobra, on 25 July, even though a number of bombs fell on their own lines. This time, 1,800 heavies, 300 medium bombers and 350 fighters saturated a concentrated area of three-and-a-half by one-and-a-half miles with a phenomenal 72,000 100-pound bombs, which caused enough damage to kill and maim but not turn the land into an impassable moonscape.

The effect was terrible – 100 per cent casualties to those troops underneath. Those not killed were sent insane while many died due to the immense concussive effect. It was also an attack that finally opened the floodgates of the German defences – defences that had been gradually but effectively chewed up and ground down since D-Day. Suddenly, the Germans were forced to pull back in a hurry and that meant risking open roads in daylight hours. This put them at the mercy of the dreaded Jabos. In the American half of the battlefield, a new tactical development was also just being put into practice. This was the Armored Column Cover, devised by Brigadier-General “Pete” Quesada, commander of IX Tactical Command, and which involved placing a pilot in a lead tank with direct VHF radio contact with standing patrols of fighter bombers above and ensured the columns on the ground were now in constant communication with the fighters above. It

helped prevent friendly fire incidents and meant those on the ground were now given advance warning of enemy positions below.

The fleeing Germans were repeatedly hammered. Between the villages of Roncey and St Denis-le-Gast, for example, a three-mile German column was caught by fighters and totally destroyed. In all 100 tanks, 250 vehicles and a mass of horse-drawn carts and wagons were annihilated.

In many ways, Allied air power came to be the defining feature of this final phase of the Normandy campaign. Despite their increasingly desperate situation, the German armies in Normandy were ordered by Hitler to mount a counter-attack across the American advance. Operation Lüttich launched on 7 August and although the town of Mortain was briefly overrun, the attack soon stalled and not least because of Allied air power. Hitler had promised the support of 1,000 Luftwaffe aircraft but although a number did take off, most were pounced upon as soon as they were airborne; not a single one reached the battlefield, while Jabos pounded the attackers, exposed as they were out in the open and in bright August sunshine. “The absolute air supremacy of the Allies,” noted General Freiherr von Gersdorff, “made any further movement by the attack units impossible.”

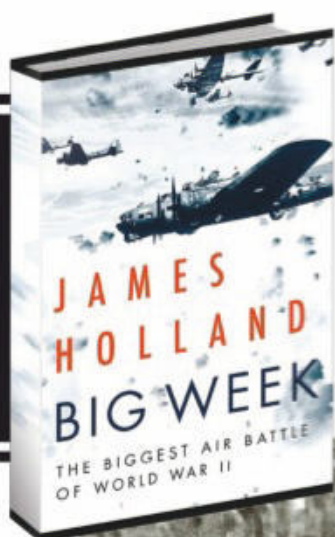
Lüttich was the Germans’ last gasp in Normandy as their forces now succumbed to

the weight of Allied forces virtually all around them. As they turned eastwards in full retreat, desperate to escape complete encirclement, the Falaise Pocket, as it became known, became yet another killing zone. Canalised into a handful of narrow roads and lanes that crossed the narrow River Dives, they were trapped nose-to-tail at the mercy of Allied artillery but especially air power.

On 22 August, with the Normandy battle finally handing the Allies a massive victory, Flight Sergeant Ken Adam, a Typhoon pilot in the RAF’s 609 Squadron, drove down to see the carnage for himself; he had been among the pilots relentlessly pounding the escaping Germans. He was also a German Jew who had escaped Berlin before the war. The road leading from the Dives valley – or what was left of it – was choked with wreckage, swollen corpses and dead cattle and horses. “The smell was terrible,” he recalled. “This was my first contact on the ground with the dead and what had been the enemy.” Truly, the carnage was appalling. Of some 2,500 German armoured fighting vehicles in Normandy, barely two dozen escaped the mayhem, alongside a mere 50,000 men from two whole armies. It had been an extraordinary victory for the Allies, one in which air power had played a critical part – before, during the invasion itself, and in the final breakout and crushing of the enemy.

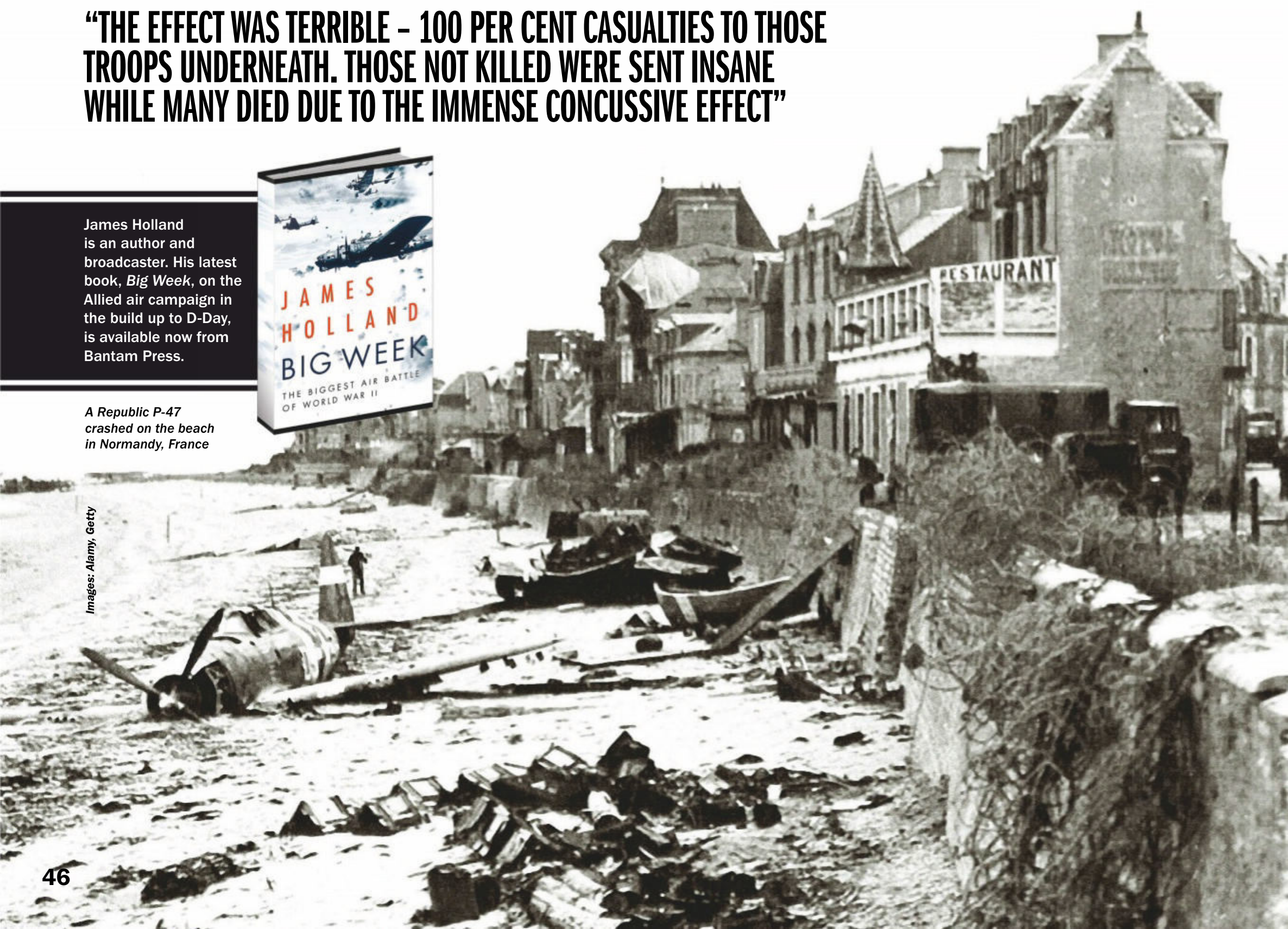
**“THE EFFECT WAS TERRIBLE – 100 PER CENT CASUALTIES TO THOSE TROOPS UNDERNEATH. THOSE NOT KILLED WERE SENT INSANE WHILE MANY DIED DUE TO THE IMMENSE CONCUSSIVE EFFECT”**

James Holland is an author and broadcaster. His latest book, *Big Week*, on the Allied air campaign in the build up to D-Day, is available now from Bantam Press.



*A Republic P-47 crashed on the beach in Normandy, France*

Images: Alamy, Getty







*E. Clark*

Corporal Edmund Henry Clark  
2nd South Staffordshire Regiment  
Fought in Ypres, awarded 1914 Star



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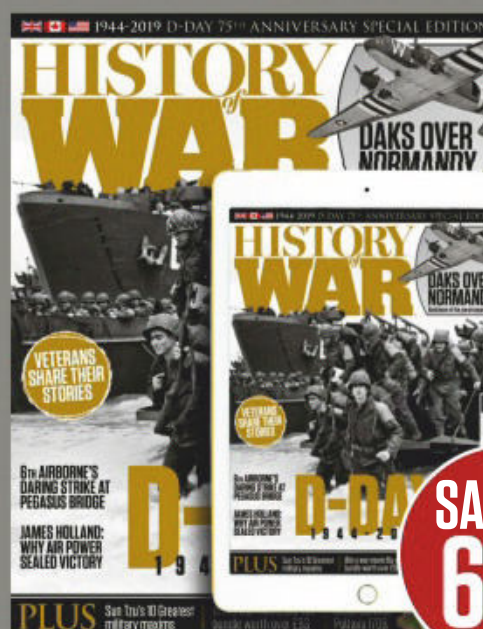


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*A Jedburgh  
commando poses  
with his full kit,  
circa 1944*





# OVERLORD

WORDS JOHN PRADOS

## PART 1: The OSS lands in Europe

**DECLASSIFIED**

Before the infantry hit the beaches on 6 June, agents of the fledgling Office of Strategic Services and Allies had been fighting the intelligence war in Occupied France, and laying the groundwork for D-Day

**W**ith the cannonade in full voice, those aboard the invasion fleet lined the gunwales to watch an enemy shore be pummelled by a cascade of shells, bombs, and rockets. It seemed impossible anyone could survive. From their perch aboard heavy cruiser Tuscaloosa, two avid observers were William B. Donovan and aide David K. E. Bruce. “Wild Bill” Donovan was the chief of the Office of Strategic Services (OSS), America’s World War II spy agency. The nickname came from World War I, in which Donovan’s heroics had earned him the Congressional Medal of Honor. David Bruce was OSS chief for Europe, with headquarters in London. This was 6 June 1944. Both Donovan and Bruce had a keen interest in the invasion. The OSS, other spy services, the French Resistance, and so many others had prepared extensively for this day.

However the entire operation might not have happened. Bad weather in the English Channel and off the Normandy beaches forced General Dwight D. Eisenhower, commander-in-chief of the Supreme Headquarters Allied Expeditionary Forces (SHAEP) to postpone D-Day by 24 hours before deciding on a much longer cancellation. Tuscaloosa steamed back toward Bristol on the Celtic Sea. The choppy waters made many ill, but Donovan and Bruce did fine. Wild Bill, excited as a young boy at Christmas, wanted to see action, even though he led a top-secret spy agency. The United States (and Allies) mounted four major amphibious invasions in the European Theatre of Operations. D-Day was the fifth, and Wild Bill had been at four of them. Bruce, a successful lawyer, farmer and politician before the war, was a veteran of ocean cruises and did not sicken easily.

Many have written about how the invasion fleet marked time that day of postponement. Bruce counted more than 75 warships and transports within a few miles of him. This was just off Bristol port, far from the invasion zone. Tuscaloosa and her cohorts reversed course,

powering through slower convoys. At one point, now in the Channel, they passed a procession of Landing Craft Tanks (LCTs), four to a row, almost six miles long.

The wind freshened. By 2am it was near to gale force and the waves strengthened rather than settled. Bruce, who kept a diary, commented on formations of C-47 aircraft flying over them toward England. Clearly they had loosed their paratroops. The invasion was on. Morning found Tuscaloosa off UTAH Beach adding to the cannonade. The warship shuddered when her heavy guns discharged.

Later in the officers’ quarters, Bruce found the salvos had shaken things off tables, as well as loosened screws in the bulkheads and shattered light bulbs. Around mid-morning a German battery targeted Tuscaloosa, the first shot more than a mile away, but adjusting the range until, when the cruiser moved, the next round impacted her previous anchorage. The warship proved lucky. Her worst damage would be something that hit the very suite where General Donovan bunked, wrecking the adjoining bathroom.

**“WILD BILL, EXCITED AS A YOUNG BOY AT CHRISTMAS, WANTED TO SEE ACTION, EVEN THOUGH HE LED A TOP-SECRET SPY AGENCY”**

The afternoon of 7 June Wild Bill and Bruce took a launch and transferred to the destroyer escort Rich, which conveyed them to where they boarded a DUKW amphibious vehicle. It took them ashore. They were on the beach, sitting on the “Duck’s” hood, when a Luftwaffe fighter-bomber made its strafing run. “Now it will be like this all the time,” Donovan quipped. Bruce recorded him grinning happily, and noticed his

boss wearing the Medal of Honor ribbon, the only time Bruce had ever seen it. Donovan rolled off the vehicle. Bruce followed. Colonel Bruce’s helmet cut Wild Bill’s neck, which bled badly. Perhaps it was the spymaster who was the lucky one. Not only did Wild Bill survive the air attack at Utah and the incident on Tuscaloosa, but on 8 June the destroyer escort that had carried him, Rich, struck a mine, suffered critical damage, and sank – one of very few major vessels lost in the Normandy invasion. Donovan seemed to leap from frying pans.

### Infiltrating Fortress Europe

Two elements of OSS/Europe were critical for activities on the continent. Special Operations (SO)/London had responsibility for sabotage and paramilitary efforts, while Secret Intelligence (SI)/London focused on espionage. Both worked with the French Resistance.

The Germans talked of Fortress Europe and of having an Atlantic Wall. They had crafted a command net to cover the country, with Alsace-Lorraine controlled from Germany, the border zone in the north administered from Belgium, and a military security command in Paris controlling three zones corresponding to the French Atlantic coast and part of the interior. There was a police higher command too, supervising French collaborationists.

A separate headquarters commanded the former Vichy France. Under these were regional and territorial security units, the dreaded Secret Field Police, and the notorious Gestapo. The Nazi Party had its own security police (SD) and counterintelligence detachments (RSHA) also. Allied agents and the Resistance had to communicate with London or Algiers by radio, which the Germans were adept at intercepting.

The possibilities of a successful invasion became apparent with Alfred, the very first agent SO/London put into the field. It was the summer of 1943 and the agent parachuted into an area of the German Southwest Security Zone. Ernest F. Floege, a Chicagoan, had fought in the American army in France in World War I



and stayed on afterwards, settling in Angers, so his native English now had a French lilt. Floege fled to England with the German conquest in 1940, and the British sabotage agency Special Operations Executive (SOE) recruited him. When the OSS appeared, they shared the agent.

Once dropped back to his former abode, Floege found his way around easily. He assembled a network codenamed Sacristan, and was given a radio operator, André Bouchardon, codenamed Narcisse. Over the summer and autumn of 1943 they received seven supply drops. Settling in a village about 20 miles from Angers, the spies felt safe, and Floege conducted all his business with Sacristan through two couriers, one of them his son. This operation lasted until 21 December.

In Angers, the younger Floege was swept up by a German security cordon, and discovered to have incriminating documents on him. The courier broke under interrogation, revealing all he knew. Field police and Gestapo arrested 45 members of Sacristan, however Alfred and Narcisse were each able to escape.

Bouchardon was eating at a restaurant when a posse of SD goons pushed their way in. He immediately realised what was happening, pushed over the table and ran for the door, startling the Nazis as he passed them. But another group of SD were outside and Bouchardon wrestled with two. As they got a grip, others shot him – a bullet to the thorax and one in each thigh. Thinking Bouchardon dead, Nazi police bundled him into the back seat of their waiting car. One got in next to him. Two more police rode in front, but the Nazis neglected to search the ‘dead’ man. Narcisse pulled a pistol from his coat and shot all three. The lifeless driver crashed the car into a ditch.

## “THE INVASION WAS ON. MORNING FOUND TUSCALOOSA OFF UTAH BEACH ADDING TO THE CANNONADE. THE WARSHIP SHUDDERED WHEN HER HEAVY GUNS DISCHARGED”

André Bouchardon not only survived the shooting and the crash, but made it to the house of a friend, intending to warn Floege as quickly as he could. Meanwhile the network leader was in his garden next morning when he saw men approach the house, whom he suspected were Gestapo. Ernest climbed the back wall and ran off – to the same friend’s house where Bouchardon lay. The two escaped along a Free French “ratline”, an underground railroad that smuggled downed Allied airmen to safety. Floege and Bouchardon climbed the Pyrenees – Narcisse with the bullet still in his thorax. They arrived in London on 25 February 1944.

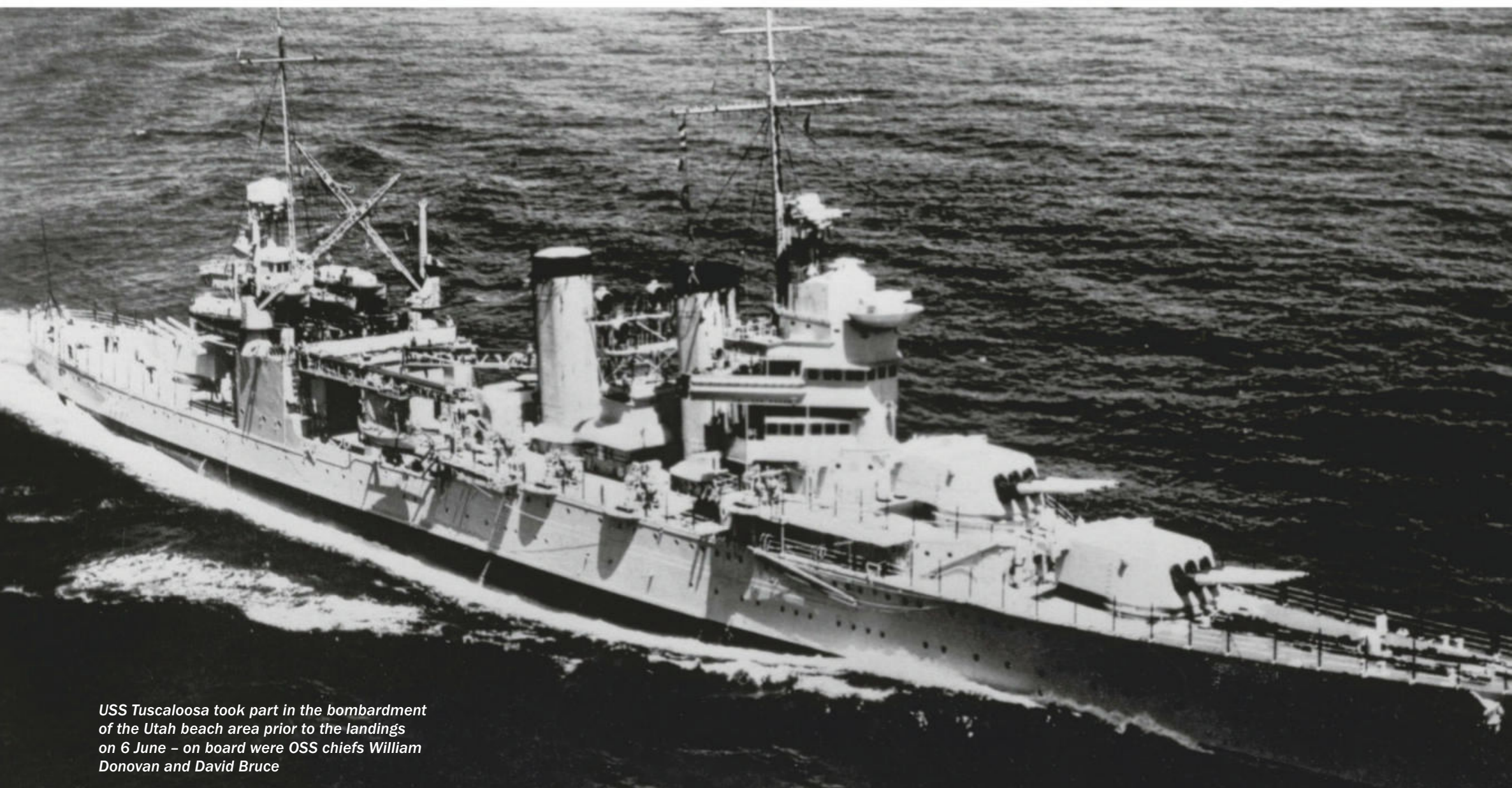
### Intelligence divided

The Sacristan network had illustrated a number of obstacles for the Allied spies. One was German security, and another was the French Resistance itself – the maquis – divided across political party, loyalty, and control lines. One faction consisted of the French communist party, which had its own Resistance forces (FTP), however this opposed both other major political movements. Those who considered their guiding star Charles de Gaulle made up

the Free French. Free French intelligence, the Bureau Central de Renseignement et d’Action (BCRA), answered to De Gaulle. Frenchmen loyal to leaders from the former French republic, exemplified by General Henri Giraud in North Africa, competed with DeGaulle politically. They controlled the traditional French intelligence agency, the Service de Renseignements (SR). OSS Director Donovan had made an agreement with Giraud for American spies to operate from French North Africa. But in London only the BCRA had a presence, creating a situation where the unit with which the Allies could do business did not actually represent all the French, or control all the maquis.

The task of breaching the Atlantic Wall, and negotiating these sensitive and complex divisions, fell to David Bruce. OSS operatives under Colonel Bruce had to consider whom to support, how support affected Resistance groups’ relations with each other, and how OSS/Europe decisions would affect OSS/Algiers cooperation with the North African French. This headache diminished a little in late 1943. DeGaulle and Giraud united into a National Resistance Committee, a provisional government, but higher-level considerations complicated the mix. Prime Minister Winston Churchill, who had created the SOE in 1941 to “set Europe ablaze”, hated DeGaulle and viewed “Gaullist” organisations sourly, limiting his spies’ cooperation with them.

President Franklin D. Roosevelt (FDR) also despised DeGaulle – but FDR stayed his hand at Wild Bill Donovan’s door, creating a situation where OSS supported anyone who wanted to kill Germans, while the British services were highly circumspect about which French they would help, looking askance at OSS profligacy. Thus the



*USS Tuscaloosa took part in the bombardment of the Utah beach area prior to the landings on 6 June – on board were OSS chiefs William Donovan and David Bruce*



SOE, which had had an “F Section”, famously under Maurice Buckmaster, working in tandem with partisans inside France, for a very long time had a separate “RF” apparatus limited to the BCRA. OSS/Europe, modelling itself on the British SOE, replicated the bifurcation between F and RF units within SO/London.

Churchill and Roosevelt’s antipathy for DeGaulle led to a determination to keep the Free French leader ignorant of the D-Day invasion planning. At the same time their intelligence services needed to arrange with the French, including the BCRA, for Resistance support to the invasion.

That gave David Bruce the headache of ensuring his activities fit with British intelligence services’ efforts while getting French cooperation on something they could not know about.

## The OSS’ British cradle

Great Britain’s spy experience spanned centuries. The British considered the Americans upstarts, while at the same time teaching the OSS what they knew. London had problems of its own that affected OSS, among them the confusions of having different intelligence units working the same street – a traditional Secret Intelligence Service (SIS, or MI-6) seeking information, and the Special Operations Executive (SOE) aimed at undermining the German occupiers.

In Algiers in late 1943 the Allies’ services met to plan spy support for an invasion of the continent. By then Allied armies were knocking Italy out of the war and looking ahead to France. How to concert plans with the French without tipping off DeGaulle became a most contentious issue.

For the Office of Strategic Services, D-Day marked both the moment for which it had prepared, and the instant all the hypotheticals became realities. David Bruce – OSS agent #105 – also faced the challenge of an infant spy agency – the OSS had existed for less than two years and 13 June would be its second birthday. In addition, every piece of OSS/London had been built from scratch. William Donovan – OSS agent #109 – had led a predecessor unit called the Coordinator of Information – that was when Bruce joined. This functioned more as an information broker, with a bit of psychological warfare at the margin but mostly research and analysis. The transition to OSS lay precisely in creating action capabilities – and that had been Donovan’s assignment for Bruce. When the latter protested he knew nothing about secret operations, Wild Bill assured him that no one else did either!

OSS/London set up shop at 70 Grosvenor Street, halfway down the road from the American embassy, and across Grosvenor Square from SHAEF headquarters. General Donovan’s arrangement with the British essentially boiled down to agreeing they approve all OSS ops mounted from the United Kingdom, which in turn worked best when they were joint ones.

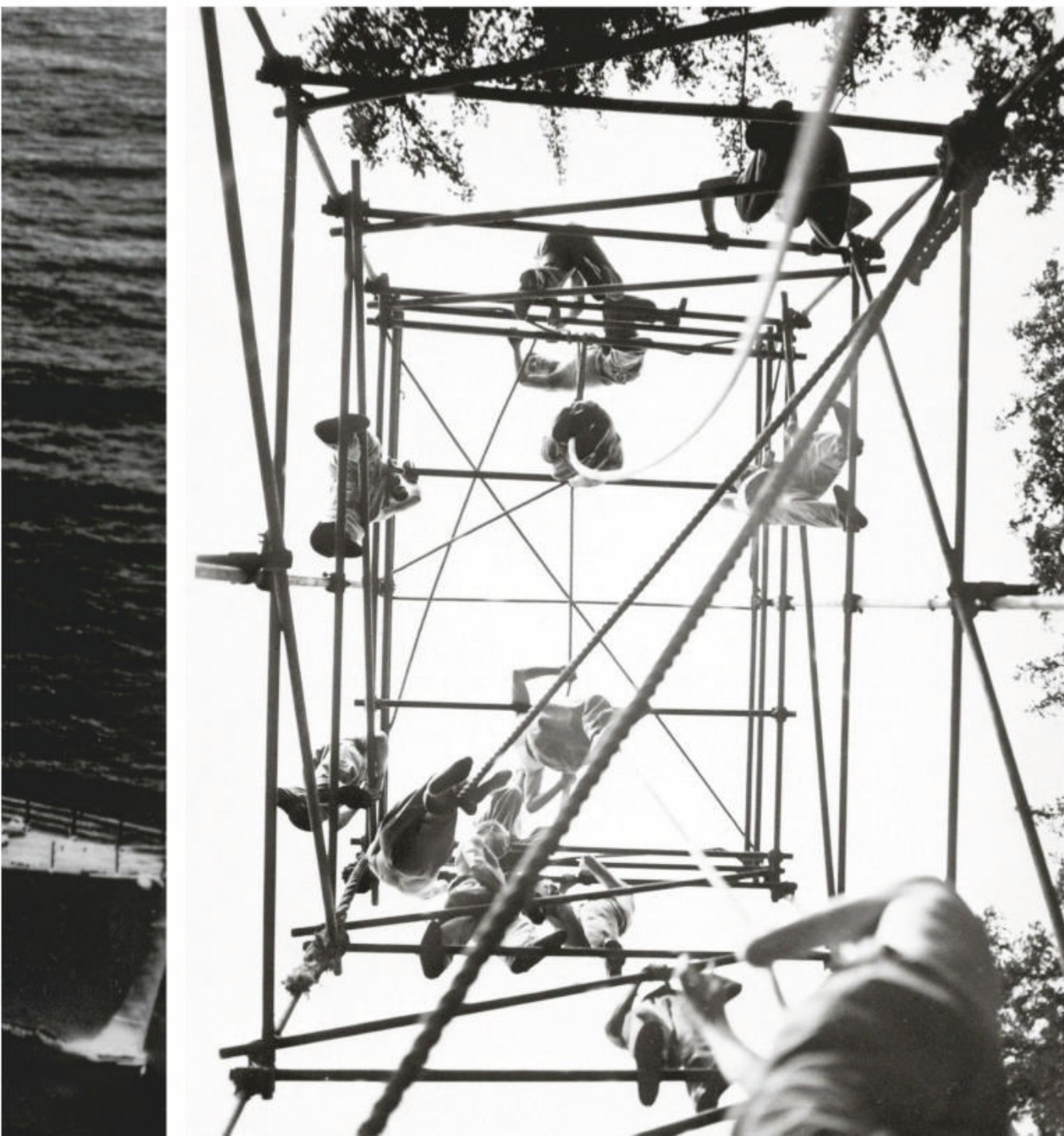
The OSS soon became a multifaceted agency, including a Morale Operations (MO) branch, which was created to conduct psychological warfare. These followed the lead of the British Political Warfare Executive. Bruce’s Secret Intelligence branch paired with the British SIS, while Special Operations became so close to SOE that a sort of joint unit emerged called SOE/SO. Counterintelligence, which OSS called X-2, paired with Section V of

SIS and the British secret service MI-5. The next question for the fledgling agency was developing programs, training people, then actually conducting operations.

In May 1943 the OSS MO chief visited London to hash out basic Allied cooperation. For a long time MO at OSS/London was the agency’s only operating outlet. Led by journalist Rae H. Smith, the branch was dominated by people from that profession, which was a positive in terms of getting out material, but shortchanging the psy-war end of the business. For example, radio broadcasting was tempting, but the British had the BBC. By far MO’s biggest problem would be the reluctance of the front line spies – SI and SO sections – to distribute any Morale Operations materials. For security reasons, the spies did not want to smuggle or distribute leaflets and similar items. They did help MO with propagating rumours, which could reach widening circles through the French Resistance. Leaflets, delivered by air, became the main substantive product for MO (along with the Office of War Information). These were produced in “nickels”, or blocks of 4,000 pieces. In January 1944, aircraft of the 801st Bombardment Group delivered 48 nickels of leaflets, building to more than 2,200 nickels in time for Operation Overlord in June.

## Operation Sussex and the Jedburghs

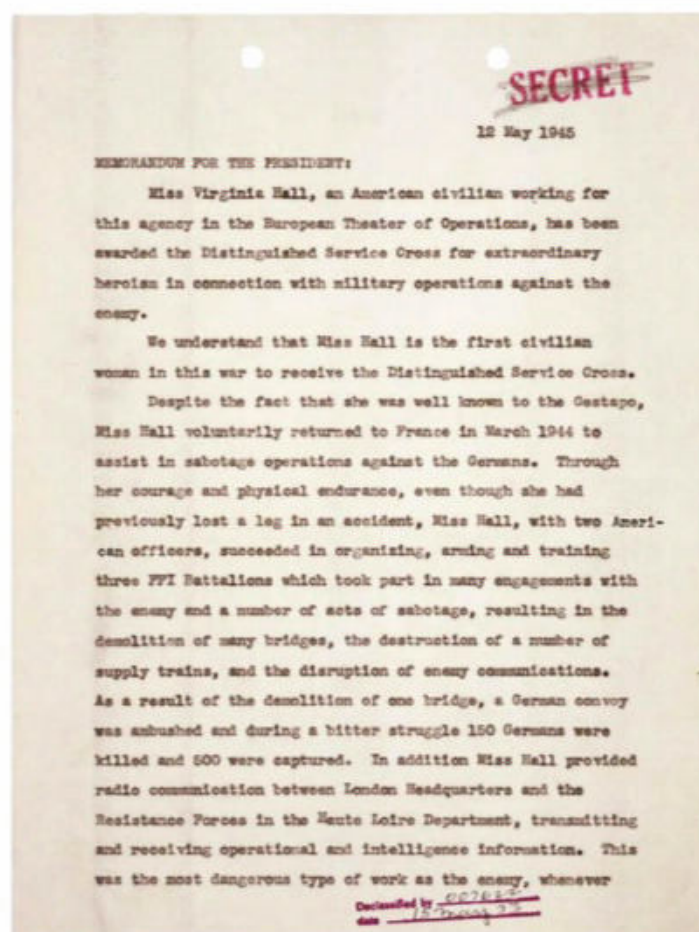
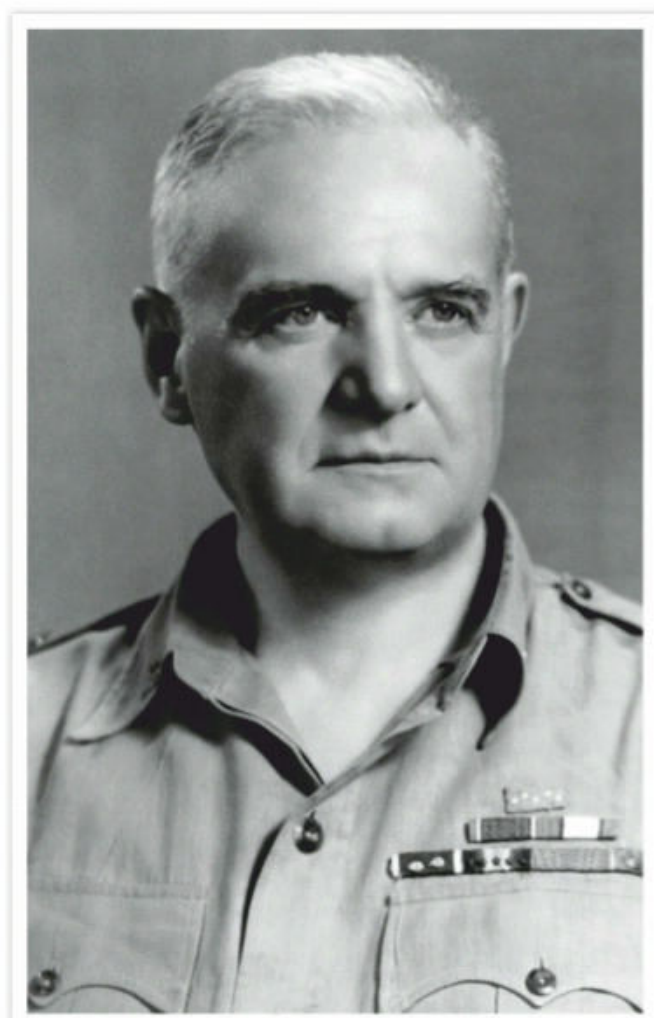
Secret Intelligence prepared for D-Day by combining with the British SIS and French BCRA for a joint spy mission. SI/London, led through most of this period by William P. Maddox – OSS agent #148 – plus the British and the French, started by identifying 50 intelligence targets in Normandy, half in what



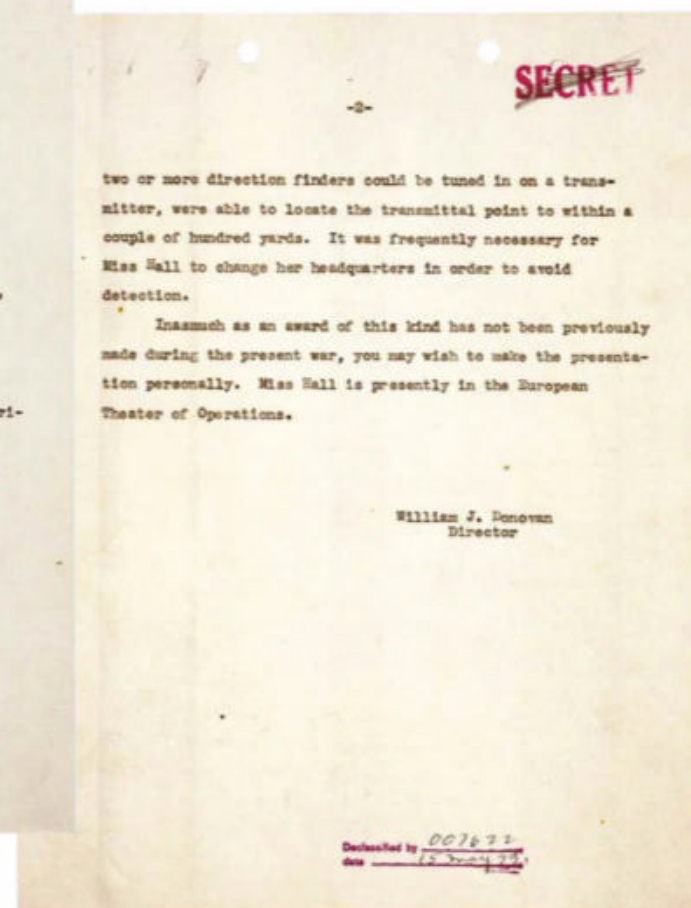
Former head of the OSS in Europe, David Bruce, is awarded the Benjamin Franklin Medal by Prince Philip, 1971

Left: Members of the secret Operation Jedburgh, scale high bars in an obstacle course in Milton Hall, Cambridgeshire, England, 1944





In this memorandum, William Donovan recommends OSS agent Virginia Hall for the Distinguished Service Cross for her actions in the build up to D-Day



Left: Major General William "Wild Bill" J. Donovan, head of the Office of Strategic Services

would become the British sector, half the American. What became Plan Sussex had a tripartite committee in charge: Colonel Francis P. Miller headed the American contingent, Colonel Gilbert Renault-Roulier (nom de guerre Rémy) the French. Key OSS participants included Hanson W. Baldwin, later a noted author and *New York Times* reporter, Henry H. Proctor, chief of air dispatch, and Ernest L. Byfield, a trainer. Each Sussex target would be covered by a team of two, one person the lead agent, the other a radio operator.

Delays assembling the teams were exacerbated by the need to keep DeGaulle in the dark, plus BCRA's political differences with the Giraudists. Kenneth Cohen, the SIS officer who led the British section of Sussex and the tripartite committee controlling it, worried about the quality of French selectees.

In the lead mission, Sussex landed Frenchwoman Jeannette Guyot (nom de guerre Gauthier) on 8 February 1944. She travelled most of the country, locating drop zones and arranging reception committees. Gauthier personally met the first nine teams, leading them to safehouses. Sussex began infiltrating France in April, when two British and an OSS team were inserted. By D-Day 21 Sussex teams were operating in the field (a British source gives 15) and one of the American teams, OSSEX-6, sent in reports enabling SHAEF to identify the Panzer Lehr Division, which some regard as worth the cost of the entire program.

Joseph F. Haskell's SO/London was held in pride of place for its work with the Resistance, sabotage, and paramilitary action. The two best-known OSS programs – the "Jedburgh" Resistance liaison teams, and the Operational Groups (OGs) – OSS special operations units – both belonged to SO. The "Jeds" were three-person multinational teams – usually an

## "THE 'JEDS' WERE THREE-PERSON MULTINATIONAL TEAMS – USUALLY AN ENGLISHMAN, AN AMERICAN, AND A FRENCHMAN – SENT TO ASSIST RESISTANCE GROUPS"

Englishman, an American, and a Frenchman – sent to assist Resistance groups. The Operational Groups were small commandos, 15 or 30 men intended for direct action.

London sent four missions to Resistance groups before D-Day, mostly in April and May. Four more followed in the week after the landings. Most, however (18 actually), took their places as the fighting continued. The Jedburghs too were primed to go with the landings, not before. In fact, the first unit landed on the continent, Team Hugh, sent to Central France on the night of 5/6 June, was recalled from an exercise to participate in the invasion. SO/London also had five Operational Groups in England primed for action. None went ahead of D-Day.

### North Africa connections

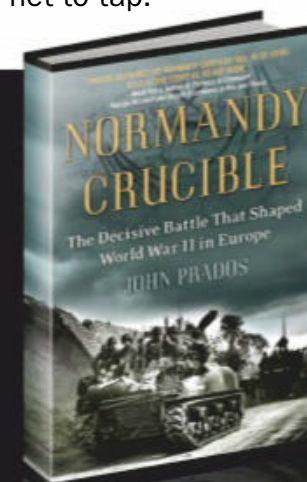
Lieutenant Colonel William P. Davis, chief of Special Operations/Algiers, was Haskell's counterpart in North Africa. In early 1944 he joined with SOE to create a combined unit, the Special Projects Operations Center. This ran OSS and SOE efforts in southern France and supported the invasion of the Riviera coast, after Normandy, called Anvil-Dragon. Davis and Haskell divided the two marquee special

ops, Jedburghs and the OGs. On D-Day there would be a half-dozen Operational Groups in North Africa – more than in England. North Africa also served as launch point for nearly 30 per cent of Jedburgh missions.

Another SO/Algiers activity was Operation Medusa. This harnessed former French army officers. Medusa had "chains" crossing France, feeding back intelligence. Small teams took advantage of Spain's neutrality to infiltrate occupied France.

The project has been described as the biggest OSS spy network in Europe. The agency had just the fellow to run it. Lieutenant Commander Thomas G. Cassady, Jr., a veteran of both the Foreign Legion and the US Army air corps – a World War I fighter ace – had been in the naval attaché office at Vichy. Cassady had made four trips across the demarcation line between Vichy and occupied France when the Germans took over the Vichy zone in November 1942, interning American embassy personnel. With diplomatic immunity, Cassady was held until exchanged in February 1944. He spent just a week in Algiers before being reactivated for Medusa. Cassady already had the agent net to tap.

John Prados is an historian based in Washington, DC, and a senior fellow of the National Security Archive. He is the author of *Normandy Crucible: The Decisive Battle That Shaped World War II in Europe* (Published by Penguin-Random House and Amberley Publishing).



Images, Alamy, Getty

**IN PART 2:** SHAEF takes control of the intelligence war, as the Allied invasion builds momentum. *History of War* issue 69 is on sale 13 June



Richard Borg

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WONDER**



## TWO ROWS OF TROOPERS

Paratroopers sat on seats along the sides of the aircraft, standing in the middle near drop-time to hook up their static lines. This automatically pulled their ripcord to open the parachute as they jumped.



*Left: Men of the 37th Troop Carrier Squadron USAAF, pose with their aircraft in England, 1944*

## DOUGLAS C-47 SKYTRAIN/DAKOTA

**COMMISSIONED:** 1940 **ORIGIN:** USA **LENGTH:** 19.4M (63FT 9IN)  
**RANGE:** 3,240KM (2,125 ML) **ENGINE:** 2 X 895KW (1200HP)  
**PRATT & WHITNEY R-1830-92 TWIN WASP** **CREW:** 4, PLUS AIR  
DESPATCHERS **TROOP CAPACITY:** 28 TROOPS OR 14 STRETCHER  
CASES **FREIGHT CAPACITY:** 2700-3400KG (6,000-7,500LB)

## LIFT AND CAPACITY

The C-47's broad wings helped generate considerable lift, and also stored large fuel tanks.

# DOUGLAS C-47 SKYTRAIN/DAKOTA



This work-horse turned war-horse became a war-winning weapon, playing a crucial role in D-Day and scores of other operations worldwide

WORDS STUART HADAWAY



**NIGHT NAVIGATION ASTRODOME**

One of the smaller adaptations for the military version was adding an astrodome, to allow star sightings to aid navigation during night flights.

**BARN DOORS**

The C-47 could open one door for paratroops to enter or to jump, or both to allow larger objects or stretchers to be loaded and unloaded.

**“THE C-47 WAS THE MILITARY VERSION OF THE COMMERCIAL DC-3 AIRLINER. STURDY AND RELIABLE, THE AIRCRAFT HAD IMMENSE CARRYING CAPACITY”**

At 10.49pm on 5 June, 1944, seven RAF Douglas C-47 Dakotas took off from RAF Down Ampney. These were the first of 1,067 Dakota or Skytrain (USAAF C-47s) sorties over the following “day of days” – the tip of the spear for the Allied liberation of Occupied Europe. The C-47 was the military version of the commercial DC-3 airliner. Sturdy and reliable, the aircraft had immense carrying capacity.

Some 28 fully equipped paratroopers could fit into the rounded fuselage, estimates vary as to the maximum cargo capacity, but it could include a jeep or small field gun. The truth was, as long as the load was balanced and the centre of gravity kept far forward, the aircraft could greatly exceed the official load. Supply canisters could also be carried under the aircraft.

The C-47 would see service in all theatres, but its iconic role would be on D-Day. Having dropped paratroopers and towed gliders full of troops and immediate supplies on the first day, subsequent days saw further lifts of men as well as supplies.

Over the following weeks and months, the Allies would be constantly short of fuel and other critical supplies, and the efforts of the C-47-led air bridge to keep these flowing were crucial. Returning aircraft evacuated the wounded to hospitals in the UK.

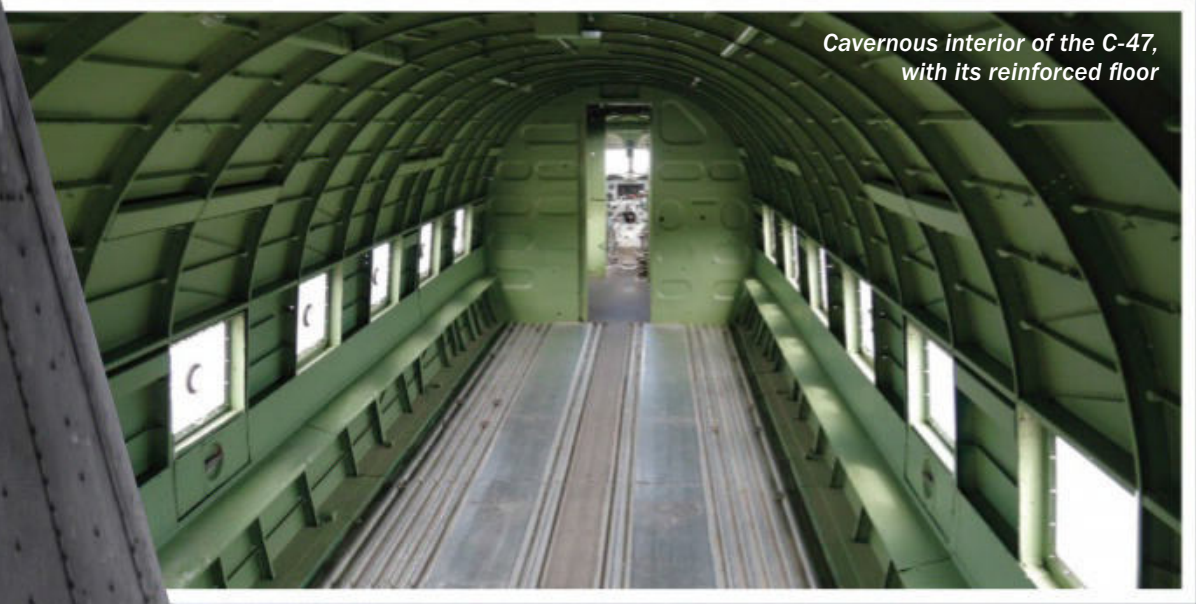


*Men of the US 101st Airborne Division in a C-47, on their way to Normandy*

**GLIDER TUG**

Shackles and reinforced structure in the tail cone allowed gliders to be towed from the rear of the C-47.





*Cavernous interior of the C-47, with its reinforced floor*



*A C-53 Skytrooper, with a distinctive smaller door than the C-47*

## DESIGN

Designed in the early 1930s as a sleeper airliner, the Douglas DC-3 was sturdy, high capacity, and technically rugged. The initial military adaptation, the C-53 Skytrooper was essentially the same as the civil version, but the C-47 Skytrain had a larger cargo door (allowing jeeps and small field guns to be carried, as well as bulky stores) and a reinforced floor. Racks were fitted to carry canisters under the aircraft, and hooks and strengthening in the tail to tow gliders. Although the overall stressed-metal skin design remained the same, many small differences such as using castings and forgings instead of welding saved on scarce wartime materials and improved production times by 50 per cent per aircraft.

**“THE INITIAL MILITARY ADAPTATION, THE C-53 SKYTROOPER WAS ESSENTIALLY THE SAME AS THE CIVIL VERSION”**

2100884

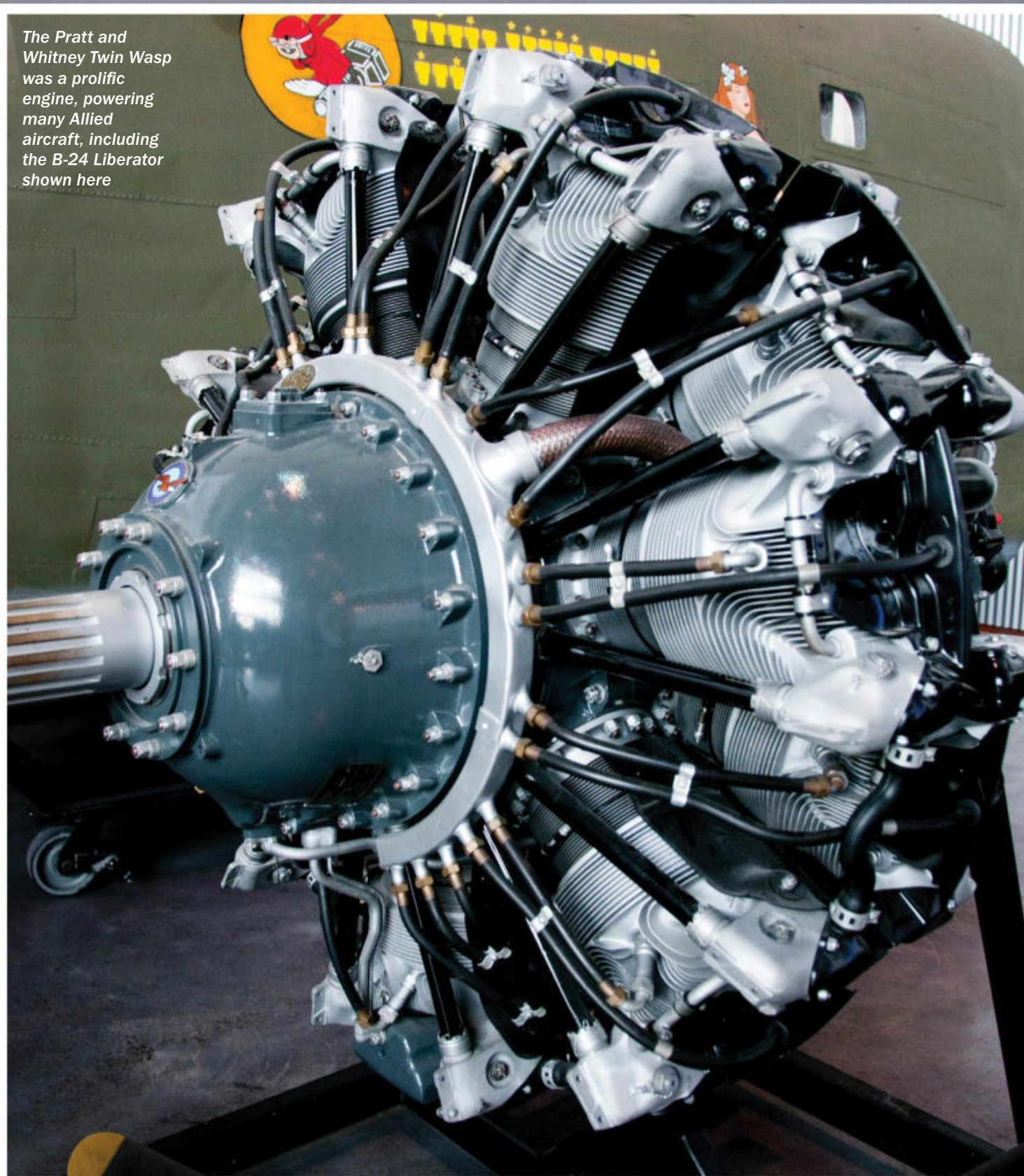


## ENGINE

The Pratt and Whitney R-1830 Twin Wasp was a hugely successful engine, initially designed in the early 1930s but running through over 30 variants with nearly 175,000 built. The basic design was an air-cooled radial engine that had 14 cylinders in two rows. The first version, used in the DC-3, had an output of 746kW (1,000hp), but by 1941 the type used for the C-47 was rated at 895kW (1,200hp). It had good high-altitude performance (ideal for its duties in the Far East flying over the Himalayas to China), and provided enough power to allow single-engine flight.

*The bulbous fuselage of the C-47 contributed to its great carrying capacity*

*The Pratt and Whitney Twin Wasp was a prolific engine, powering many Allied aircraft, including the B-24 Liberator shown here*



## DAKS OVER DUXFORD

As part of IWM's D-Day75 anniversary week of events Daks Over Duxford will bring the extraordinary story of D-Day to life, uniting the greatest number of Douglas C-47 Skytrain and Dakota aircraft in one location since the Second World War. Daks Over Duxford will take place at IWM Duxford on 4-5 June 2019. For tickets and more information visit: [www.iwm.org.uk/events/daks-over-duxford](http://www.iwm.org.uk/events/daks-over-duxford)



*C-47 Skytrains at the 2014 D-Day Anniversary Air Show at IWM Duxford*

Image: IWM





**COCKPIT**

The C-47 was cramped and surprisingly basic. The pilots sat side-by-side with little elbow room, with the throttle controls between them on a console that included other engine-related controls. Large steering wheels came out on storks from each side and allowed either pilot or co-

pilot to take control, although the instruments were not duplicated on both sides. A few key instruments, including the compass and artificial horizon, sat centrally over the throttles, but flying entirely solo would be difficult. Further controls were placed on roof panels over the pilots. The wireless operator and navigator had small compartments behind the pilots.

*Cramped and basic – the cockpit of the C-47*



*The navigator's table in the C-47, just behind the cockpit*



C-47s towing gliders  
towards the Normandy  
coast, 6 June 1944



The Battle of Britain Memorial Flight's  
Dakota, showing the iconic black and  
white identity stripes added to Allied  
aircraft for the Normandy landings



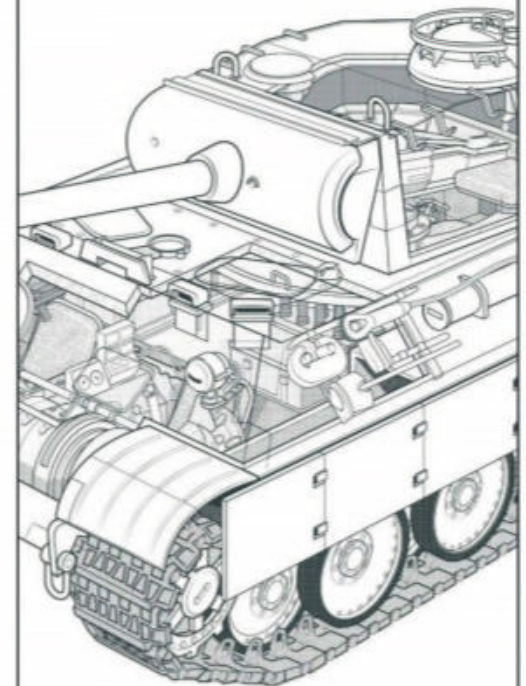
## SERVICE HISTORY

When the US Army began looking to expand its airborne arm in the late 1930s, the DC-3 was a natural choice. It initially entered service as the C-53 Skytrooper in 1941, but a few months later the C-47 Skytrain followed, better modified for airborne operations. They became a workhorse around the world. The Americans had over 8,000, and the RAF and Commonwealth nearly 2,000. The Soviets built a further 6,000, and even the Japanese built nearly 500 (under a pre-war licence).

In Britain, partially thanks to the Battle of Britain Memorial Flight's Dakota usually being painted in invasion stripes, the aircraft is synonymous with D-Day and the Normandy campaign. Dropping tens of thousands of paratroopers from three Airborne Divisions and scores of gliders in the opening waves, the C-47 played a crucial role in moving men and supplies

into the beachhead through the first vital days, weeks, and then months of the liberation of France. Later, Dakotas would play a leading role in the liberation of southern Holland, and the final invasion of Germany.

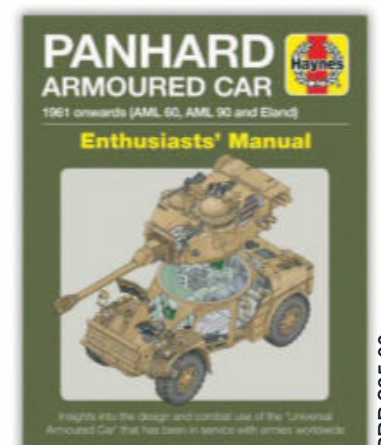
**“DROPPING TENS OF THOUSANDS OF PARATROOPERS FROM THREE AIRBORNE DIVISIONS AND SCORES OF GLIDERS IN THE OPENING WAVES, THE C-47 PLAYED A CRUCIAL ROLE IN MOVING MEN AND SUPPLIES”**



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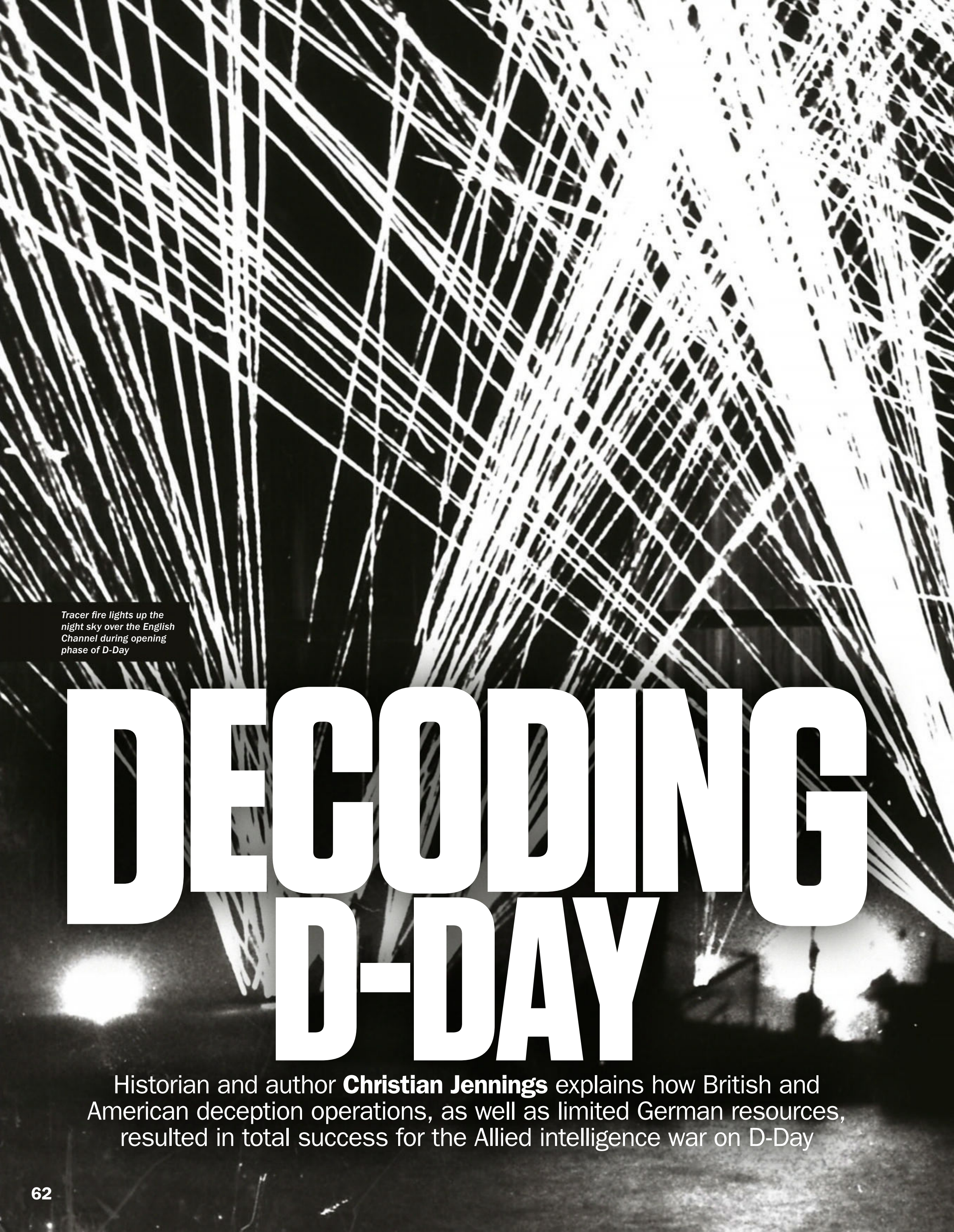


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Tracer fire lights up the night sky over the English Channel during opening phase of D-Day

# DECODING D-DAY

Historian and author **Christian Jennings** explains how British and American deception operations, as well as limited German resources, resulted in total success for the Allied intelligence war on D-Day





*A soldier of the secret radio communications service of the Oberkommando der Luftwaffe at work*

*Bundesarchiv, Bild 146-2005-0157 / CC-BY-SA 3.0*

**A**t the end of May 1944, the headquarters of the Luftwaffe's signals intelligence regiment at Asnières, outside Paris, issued a direct invasion warning, "All preparations by the British and American air forces are complete. Two British and two American Close Support Corps for the support of four armies are available. The embarkation of Air Force Staffs has begun. The beginning of a large scale landing must now be reckoned with any day."

At midnight on 5 June, a young Luftwaffe signals officer called Lieutenant Martin Ludwig, and his men, were awake and on full alert in their headquarters at Deauville, 15 miles east of the Allied invasion beaches. Ludwig was one of the signals evaluation officers based in northern France from the OKL, or Oberkommando der Luftwaffe. In 1942 he'd helped provide 'sigint' about the disastrous Allied landings at Dieppe as the operation began.

Now, in June 1944, the entire signals intercept and radar apparatus of the Luftwaffe in the whole of northern France was going mad. German radio discipline was falling to pieces. Commanders were reporting their men's sightings of Allied paratroopers, daily codes were forgotten by some, strictly

adhered to by others. From north of Caen to the Cotentin peninsula, a blanket of radio confusion took over. Then, at dawn on the 6 June, Ludwig and his men listened as high-speed, urgent messages came in from German gun emplacements manned by the 352nd Infantry Division on the coast behind Vierville-sur-mer.

## **"THE GERMAN LUFTWAFFE HAD BEGUN CRACKING THE CODES OF THE RAF AS SOON AS WAR BEGAN IN 1939"**

Looking out from their positions over the sea, as dawn broke they could see ships stretching from one end of the horizon to another. Then came reports that landing craft, dozens of them, were coming straight at them through the surf. Unknown to Ludwig, in front of the German infantrymen's concrete emplacements was a key Allied target. It's codename? Dog Green Sector, Omaha Beach.

The German Luftwaffe had begun cracking the codes of the RAF as soon as war began in 1939. By 1944 their signals intelligence units in northern France had estimated through

deciphered signals the target areas of Allied bombing, and that the predicted invasion would come between Calais and Cherbourg. This was 290 miles. It was a lot of coastline.

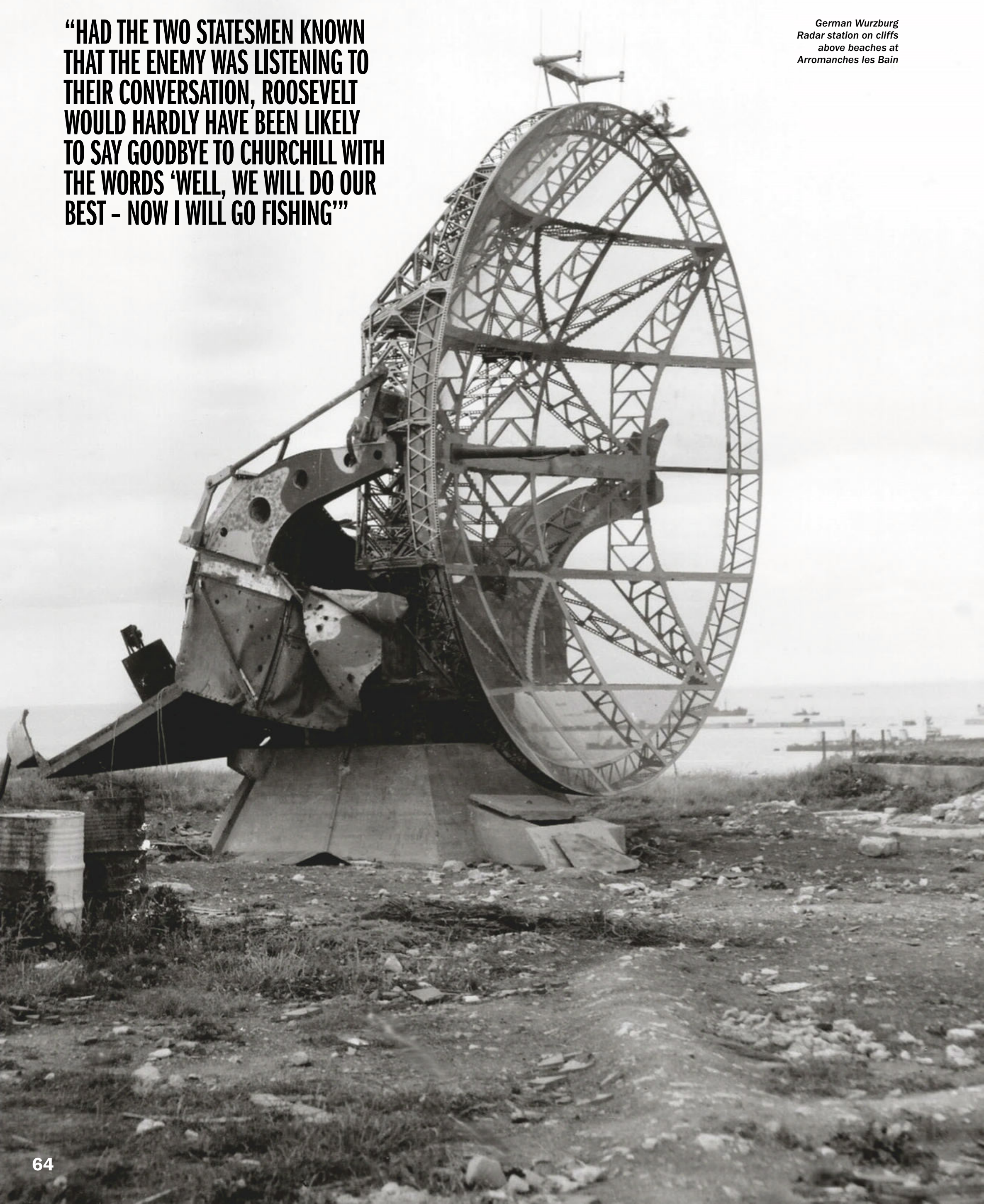
Ludwig and his men had been using deciphered codes and RDF (Radio Direction-Finding) to track the movements of the RAF and the USAAF since mid-1942. The build-up of squadrons in southern England was, by March 1944, greater than anything they had seen before. The Luftwaffe had also made reconnaissance flights over the channel ports, but these were extremely risky – if a Junkers Ju-52 with a reconnaissance team and a radio monitoring unit on board were to appear within range of any British airfield or port, it would be shot down. The Germans tried a number of ways to photograph training areas, troop assembly points for the coming invasion, as well as harbours and airbases, using fast Messerschmitt Bf 109s, and even a captured American P-47 Thunderbolt. But safe and effective ways of gathering up-to-date tactical and strategic intelligence were extremely limited, making codebreaking and signals intelligence a vital weapon.

By March 1944, exercises and practice missions in Great Britain had ceased. The last practice training operation that Ludwig's men monitored was codenamed Spartan.



**“HAD THE TWO STATESMEN KNOWN THAT THE ENEMY WAS LISTENING TO THEIR CONVERSATION, ROOSEVELT WOULD HARDLY HAVE BEEN LIKELY TO SAY GOODBYE TO CHURCHILL WITH THE WORDS ‘WELL, WE WILL DO OUR BEST – NOW I WILL GO FISHING’”**

*German Würzburg  
Radar station on cliffs  
above beaches at  
Arromanches les Bain*





Ludwig told his superiors several times that this meant that the build-up for the invasion had now gone beyond the final training stage, and moved into the phase immediately before a big operation where radio silence was imposed.

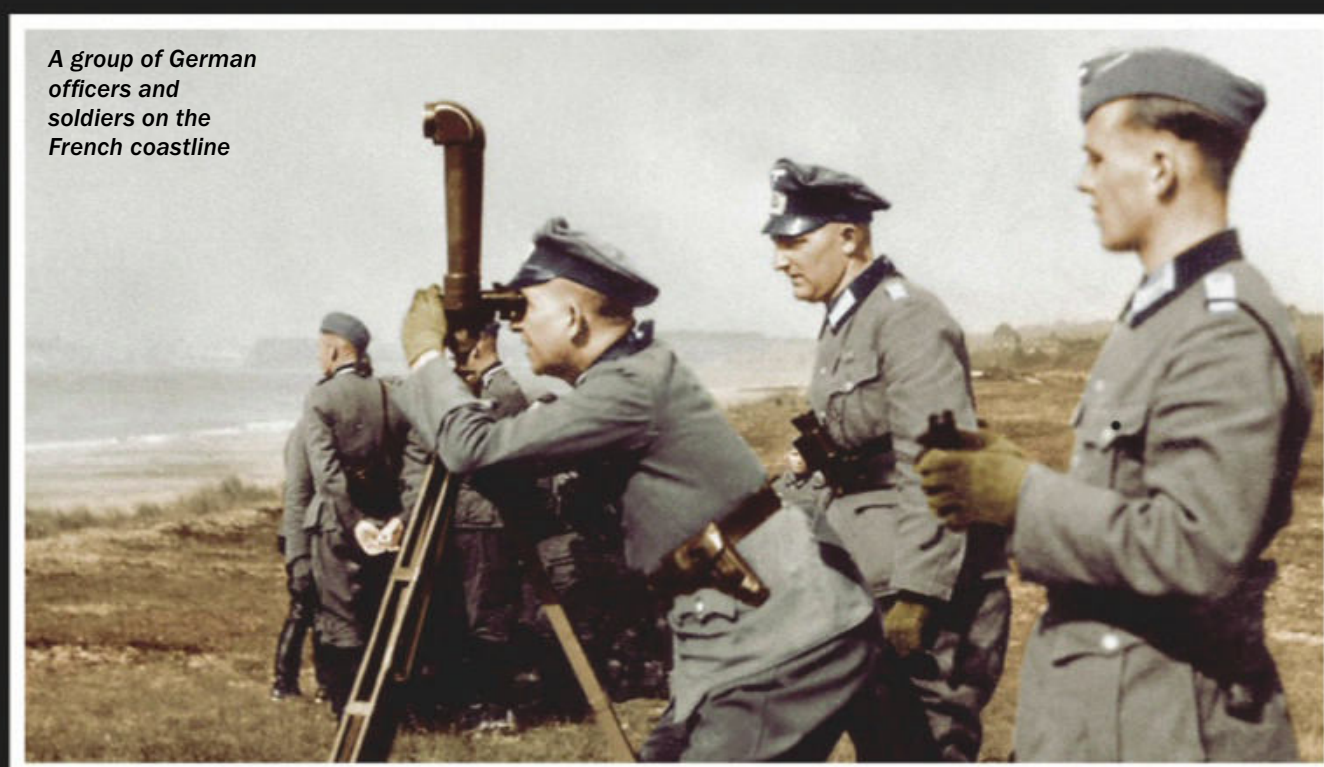
Meanwhile, on 27 May 1944, the Japanese ambassador to Berlin, Colonel Hiroshi Oshima, had had a meeting with Adolf Hitler. The two men met regularly, but unbeknownst to Oshima, the Allies were reading his messages sent back to Tokyo, as the Japanese diplomatic code – codenamed Purple by the Americans – had been cracked two years earlier. American leaders thus often had the opportunity to read the intercepts before the signals even arrived in Japan, as telegram and radio communications between Berlin and Tokyo were often jammed – given the difficulties of aerial bombing raids, the war in Russia, and the increasing bombing of the Japanese capital. At the meeting on 27 May, Hitler told Oshima his concerns. The Führer thought there would be diversionary operations from the Second Front in Norway, Denmark and southern France, and the main attack would be made on Normandy and Brittany, with a subsequent strike across the Straits of Dover.

Another covert source of information was also giving up its secrets to German codebreakers. The A-3 speech scrambler was a device used on the Washington-London radiotelephone link, and it had yielded a few crucial hints in conversations between Roosevelt and Churchill that an invasion was coming, but not where.

General Walter Schellenberg of the SD security service – the intelligence service of the SS – reportedly saw a priority message in March 1944 between Winston Churchill and Roosevelt, “Early in 1944,” he said, “we hit a bull’s eye by tapping a telephone conversation between Roosevelt and Churchill which was overheard and deciphered by the giant German listening post in Holland ... it disclosed a crescendo of military activity in Britain, thereby corroborating the many reports of impending invasion. Had the two statesmen known that the enemy was listening to their conversation, Roosevelt would hardly have been likely to say goodbye to Churchill with the words ‘Well, we will do our best – now I will go fishing’.”

Closer to June, Lieutenant Ludwig and his men had also noticed that the codenames of the Allied squadrons they were monitoring, and the call-signs of some of their fighters and bombers, were all converging on a number of air bases in southern England. The radio call-signs of the American Second Tactical Air Force had already been identified by mid-1943 by the Luftwaffe signals intelligence units. The call-signs of the 83rd and 84th Fighter Groups in Great Britain, and the 2nd Bomber Group, were consistently identified through the use of radio direction-finding against the particular airfields from which they were operating. So when the headquarters of the 2nd Bomber Group, for instance, moved from near the Wash, in Lincolnshire, southwards to the area around Reading, the Germans had clear evidence that a concentration of air assets was now focused in southern England.

In March 1944 a new Allied radio network appeared, broadcasting on a frequency that Ludwig’s unit monitored. Using radio direction-



*A group of German officers and soldiers on the French coastline*

finding equipment, this was pinpointed to the area around Cottesmore in Rutland and Grantham in Lincolnshire. It was the control centre in three subsidiary radio nets, centred on Exeter, Cottesmore and Aldermaston, and along with other ground-to-air radio traffic intercepted from all over southern Britain, there suddenly appeared electronic evidence of a large number of aircraft that did not belong to any known bomber formations.

Through monitoring the signals detailing their refuelling requirements, the Germans worked out that these new aircraft all had two engines. What were they? Firstly, they seemed to be carrying out a shuttle service between a number of south coast airfields, and secondly, many of them would take off, fly for strict, pre-determined times from their home air strips, and then turn around and return. The Germans suspected they were dropping paratroopers.

Through reading the RAF’s Bomber Code, the Germans saw that the aircraft designation of C-47 was repeatedly mentioned. In another message the name of the 50th Wing appeared. Since Luftwaffe signals intelligence knew that the 51st Wing, based in Italy, was an air transport unit, it followed that the 50th should be the same. The Germans then began radio monitoring a short-wave band of 500 kilocycles coming from RAF Fulbeck in Lincolnshire. C-47s would practice towing gliders, and messages between them and the gliders, on the same frequency, were exchanged, “Have you the glider in tow?” “Can you see the match-box?” “There is a nine-ship C-47 with gliders in tow.”

The C-47A Skytrain was more commonly known by the name Dakota, and squadrons, wings and groups hundreds-strong, with gliders, were now being deployed from Essex to eastern Cornwall. The Luftwaffe made a conservative estimate that the Allies might have 1,000 of these, each capable of carrying 28 fully equipped paratroopers. In May 1944 Luftwaffe signals intelligence also read Allied signals between the RAF’s ground-to-air support parties, and the navy and air force personnel based on ships in the invasion force whose task it was to liaise with them. Radio direction-finding triangulated these support parties and ships near Plymouth and Southampton. The invasion was imminent.

Operation Overlord itself was picked up during the night of 5-6 June when, shortly before midnight, the 100th RAF Group began an intensive operation aimed at jamming the German radar stations on the channel coast. The jamming ‘blanket’ moved from east to west, so to the Germans it was obviously hiding a large formation of ships. Weather reconnaissance for the 8th and 9th Bomber Groups in England had begun far earlier than was usual for an RAF bombing operation, and then the approach of the Allied invasion fleet was carried out under strict radio silence.

In Normandy the Germans had the signals intelligence, but were woefully under-equipped to do anything with it. In the days and weeks after 6 June, this was the case time and again. On 7 June German soldiers found a deserted, bullet-holed American landing craft that was drifting in the bull-rushes of the estuary of the River Vire, west of Omaha Beach. Inside there were discarded haversacks and map cases.

One of them contained a codebook, which detailed the daily key settings for the days of 6-12 June of the M-209 Hagelin enciphering machines used for tactical communications by the American 101st and 82nd Airborne Divisions. In tactical and strategic theory, this should have given the Germans the upper hand in fighting against these airborne soldiers in the first days of the invasion. But the Germans could not translate this intelligence advantage into operational success if they did not have enough fuel for their tanks, or if they were pinned down in the bocage hedgerows by British Typhoon fighter bombers with no air assets to fight them off. It was proof of one of the vital lessons of warfare, which is that however good a combatants’ intelligence, it is useless without the means to put it into operational effect

**The Third Reich is Listening: Inside German Codebreaking 1939-45** by Christian Jennings is published by Osprey Publishing



Images: Alamy, Getty





# THEODORE ROOSEVELT, JR.

He hailed from the USA's most famous political dynasty, but on 6 June this Brigadier General spurned celebrity, age, infirmity and enemy fire to direct 4th Infantry Division troops inland from Utah Beach

WORDS MICHAEL E. HASKEW

**H**e was 56 years old and kept knowledge of a heart condition to himself. He walked with a cane due to an old wound suffered during World War I and was recovering from a bout with pneumonia. But Brigadier General Theodore Roosevelt, Jr., son of the famed 26th President of the United States, would not take “no” for an answer.

Assistant commander of the US 4th Infantry Division, Roosevelt intended to accompany the first wave of troops as they came ashore at Utah Beach in French Normandy during Operation Overlord on D-Day, 6 June 1944. He wrote a passionate plea to division commander Major General Raymond O. “Tubby” Barton explaining, “The force and skill with which the first elements hit the beach and proceed may determine the ultimate success of the operation.” Further, in a letter to his wife, Eleanor, he reasoned, “It steadies the young men to know I’m with them, to see me plodding along with my trench cane.”

When General Barton finally relented, he did not expect to see Roosevelt alive again. For Ted Roosevelt, however, there could be no other course. His father had taught at an early age that privilege and real leadership required positive action, and here was the opportunity to do just that. General Roosevelt was acquainted with combat and with grief. He had nearly lost a leg and was gassed at Soissons during the Great War, receiving the Distinguished Service

Cross for valour. His brother Archie was also wounded, and another brother, Quentin, was killed in action.

After the war, Roosevelt entered civilian and diplomatic life, serving as governor of Puerto Rico and governor general of the Philippines. He held numerous prestigious positions in business and survived the tarnishing of his reputation during the infamous Teapot Dome Scandal of the 1920s. Prior to US entry into World War II, he attended a “refresher” course for former army officers, and in April 1941 he returned to active duty with the rank of colonel. Later that year, he was promoted to brigadier general while commanding the 26th Infantry Regiment.

**“I LOVED TED. WHEN I FINALLY AGREED TO HIS LANDING WITH THE FIRST WAVE, I FELT SURE HE WOULD BE KILLED... YOU CAN IMAGINE, THEN, THE EMOTION WITH WHICH I GREETED HIM”**

**General Raymond O. “Tubby” Barton,  
4th Infantry Division commander**

When US troops landed in North Africa during Operation Torch on 8 November 1942, Roosevelt led the 26th Regiment, 1st Division, ashore at Oran, Algeria. Within months, he was promoted to assistant division commander under Major General Terry Allen. The two commanders were popular with the troops, and they shunned the spit, polish, and protocol of other senior officers. At the same time, they were two of the most experienced field commanders in the US Army. Nevertheless, they garnered the ire of influential men whose perspective on military conduct differed.

Chief among them was General George S. Patton, Jr., well known as a stickler for military deportment. Patton, commander of the US Seventh Army in Sicily, campaigned to remove both Allen and Roosevelt from command of the 1st Division. General Omar Bradley, commander of the II Corps, agreed that the two men had grown overly close to their troops, potentially eroding the fighting efficiency of the division, and did relieve them.

It was the nadir of Roosevelt’s military career, and while serving in Sardinia and in Italy as the chief liaison officer with the French Army for General Dwight D. Eisenhower, supreme Allied commander, he continually sought combat command. In February 1944, he was transferred to Britain as assistant commander of the 4th Infantry Division under General Barton.

On D-Day, the troops of the 8th Infantry Regiment, commanded by Colonel James Van



*Brigadier General  
Theodore Roosevelt, Jr.,  
was the oldest man to  
land with Allied troops  
on D-Day*

**“ALTHOUGH THE ENEMY  
HAD THE BEACH UNDER  
CONSTANT DIRECT FIRE,  
BRIG. GEN. ROOSEVELT  
MOVED FROM ONE  
LOCALITY TO ANOTHER,  
RALLYING MEN AROUND  
HIM, DIRECTED AND  
PERSONALLY LED THEM  
AGAINST THE ENEMY”**

**Medal of Honor citation**

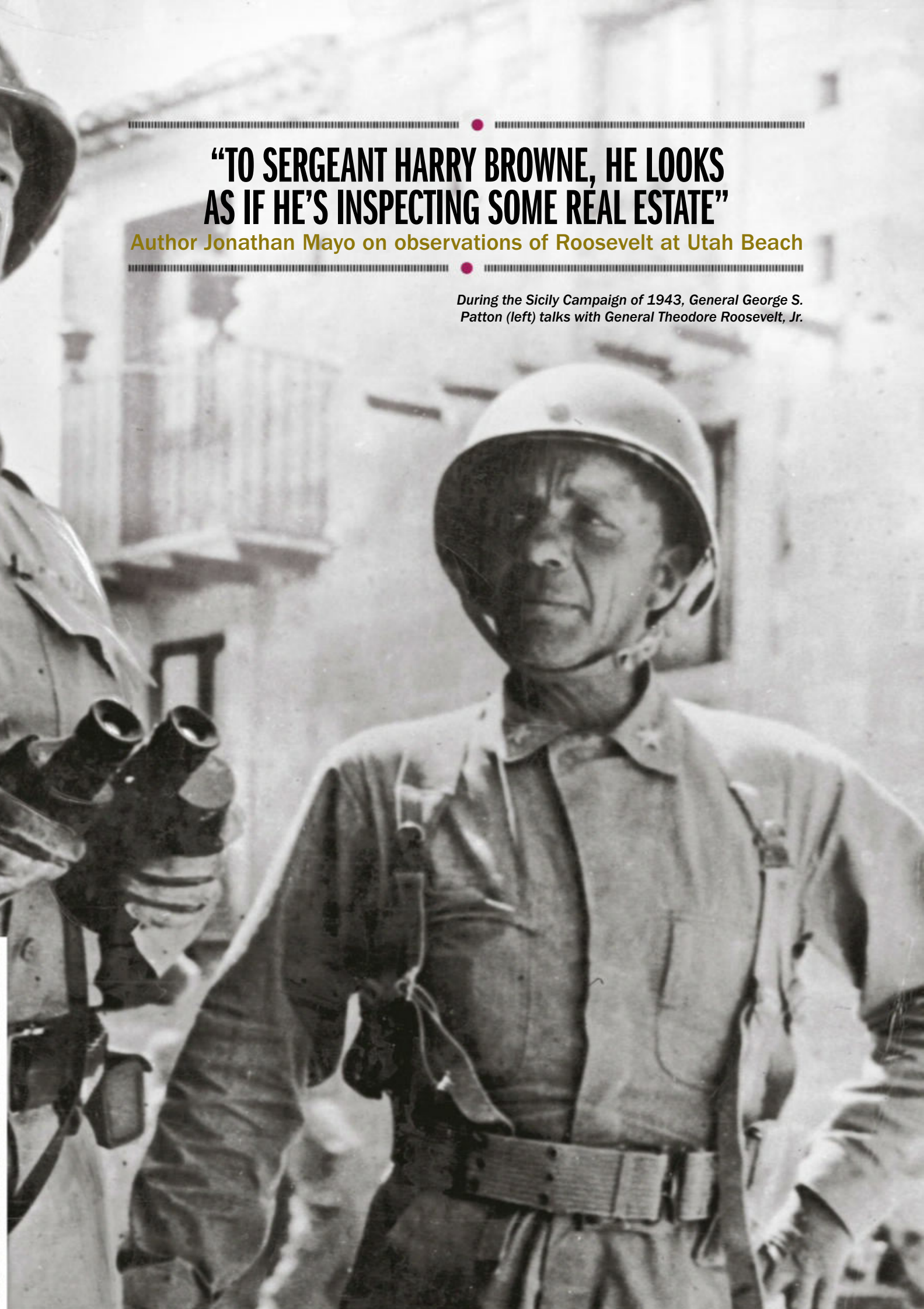


## “TO SERGEANT HARRY BROWNE, HE LOOKS AS IF HE’S INSPECTING SOME REAL ESTATE”

Author Jonathan Mayo on observations of Roosevelt at Utah Beach

*During the Sicily Campaign of 1943, General George S. Patton (left) talks with General Theodore Roosevelt, Jr.*

*Roosevelt pictured with his cane in France, shortly before his death*



Fleet, clambered down cargo nets and into landing craft that pitched and heaved in the rough English Channel. Roosevelt was with them. While the landing craft churned toward Utah Beach, he noted the bombers of the US 9th Air Force as they screeched overhead to attack targets. He remembered the “ripple of thunder, blazes of light, clouds of dust, and the planes would pass us again on the way home”.

When the ramps of the landing craft crashed down in the surf, men sprinted forward. Compared to the hell of Omaha Beach to the east, German fire was relatively light and casualties were few. Still, it was an exhilarating but dangerous moment. Roosevelt later recalled that he “splashed and floundered

through some hundred yards of water while German salvos fell. Men dropped, some silent, some screaming. Up the 400 yards of beach we ran – Grandfather puffed a bit – then we reached the seawall. The company CO with whom I was, a great tower of a man, led his troops splendidly. He with his men started into the dunes to attack the German strongpoints”.

From his seawall vantage point, Roosevelt scanned the area and noticed that something was not quite right. He saw a house that should not have been there if the landing had occurred in the right place. “I scrambled up the dunes and was lucky in finding a windmill which I recognized. We’d been put ashore a mile too far to the south.”





**Above:** Roosevelt's funeral in France, 1944

*Roosevelt's grave at the American cemetery at Colleville sur Mer*



Roosevelt was correct. Three of four vessels that had been tasked with guiding the 8th Regiment to Utah Beach were sunk by mines, the smoke and haze of the pre-invasion bombardment was confusing, and strong currents contributed to the drift of the 20 landing craft 1,800 metres (2,000 yards) south of their intended location. Ironically, it was just where Colonel Van Fleet had suggested the landing take place all along.

Roosevelt and Van Fleet conferred, the colonel advising, "Go straight inland. We've caught the enemy at a weak point, so let's take advantage of it." Roosevelt nodded and is quoted as saying, "I'm going ahead with the troops. You get the word to the Navy to bring

[reinforcements] in. We're going to start the war from right here!"

Throughout the morning, Roosevelt stood while German mortar and artillery rounds peppered Utah Beach and the area just inland. One of few soldiers alive who was not wearing a helmet, he seemed to relish the fact that the Germans had not struck down a general in his standard-issue cloth cap. Within two hours, reinforcements were coming ashore at Utah Beach, and the 4th Infantry Division was on the move to secure causeways that spanned marshy terrain behind the shoreline and led toward a linkup with paratroopers of the 101st Airborne Division who had moved to secure the causeway exits.

## THEODORE ROOSEVELT, JR.

**"HI JOHNNY! IT'S A GREAT DAY FOR HUNTING! GLAD YOU MADE IT!"**

**Theodore Roosevelt, Jr.**

When General Barton came ashore just after 9am, he "felt like a second lieutenant... no real command decisions were needed. My real contribution was just being there for my staff to rally on". Barton and Roosevelt embraced, and the old man of the 4th Infantry Division went back to work, shouting orders and encouragement as he plodded through sand and along dusty paths with his trusty cane. Cheerfully, he yelled to another officer, "Hi Johnny! It's a great day for hunting! Glad you made it!"

General Barton recommended Roosevelt for the Distinguished Service Cross for his valour on Utah Beach, and the request was subsequently upgraded to the Medal of Honor. The award was presented on September 28, 1944, posthumously. By that time Ted Roosevelt was dead, felled by a heart attack on July 12, the very day that General Bradley had recommended him for promotion to major general and command of the 90th Infantry Division. The citation read in part, "His valor, courage, and presence in the very front of the attack and his complete unconcern at being under heavy fire inspired the troops to heights of enthusiasm and self-sacrifice."

Roosevelt, whose father was posthumously awarded the Medal of Honor in 2001 for heroism at the Battle of San Juan Hill during the Spanish-American War, was buried in the town of St. Mere-Eglise with Generals Bradley, VII Corps commander J. Lawton Collins, and ironically, Patton, among the pallbearers. He was later reinterred at the American cemetery in Normandy. In 1955 the body of his brother, Quentin, was exhumed and brought to rest beside him.

While he had begged Barton to allow him to land in the first wave at Utah Beach, Roosevelt assured the 4th Division commander, "With troops engaged for the first time, the behaviour pattern of all is apt to be set by those first engagements. [It is] considered that accurate information of the existing situation should be available for each succeeding element as it lands. You should have when you get to shore an overall picture in which you can place confidence. I believe I can contribute materially on all of the above by going in with the assault companies..."

General Theodore Roosevelt, Jr. was true to his word. His inspirational leadership at tremendous personal risk made a difference at Utah Beach. From the potential chaos of landing in the wrong location, he worked with other officers to redefine objectives and issue relevant orders that set the liberation of western Europe in motion at the time and place, and under the adverse circumstances, that were presented to him. In such a situation, true leadership emerged and was recognised with the highest award the United States can bestow for heroism in the crucible of combat.



# 10 ANCIENT MAXIMS FOR MODERN MILITARIES

孫子

Author and historian Anthony Tucker-Jones selects ten of his favourite maxims from Sun Tzu's ancient treatise on military strategy, and discusses why they are so relevant to modern conflicts

**S**un Tzu is the ultimate military guru and *The Art Of War* is the ultimate military self-help book. It consists of 13 chapters containing a total of 385 maxims. Most are common sense, a few are completely inscrutable, while others remain universal truths about the nature of warfare. Certainly he is more accessible than that other doyen of military thought – Carl von Clausewitz. Although he was writing centuries ago, there are dozens of examples in modern conflicts that demonstrate Sun Tzu's wisdom.

A rubber decoy tank in England, 1944



## 1 "All warfare is based on deception"

This is the ultimate Sun Tzu maxim. When he was writing soldiering was seen as an honourable profession governed by certain codes of conduct. Sun Tzu basically said the means justify the ends, however to trick your enemy was seen as dishonourable. Today deception in warfare is taken for granted. One of the greatest examples of this was Operation Fortitude carried out prior to D-Day in 1944. This very successfully convinced Hitler that the Allies' main invasion point would be in the Pas de Calais. As a result he continued to believe that Normandy was a diversion until it was too late.

2

"If you know the enemy and know yourself, you need not fear the result of a hundred battles.  
If you know yourself but not the enemy, for every victory gained you will also suffer a defeat.  
If you know neither the enemy nor yourself, you will succumb in every battle"

This is by far the most famous of *The Art Of War*'s maxims and has been paraphrased over the years by generals and captains of industry. It also ties in with Sun Tzu's guidance on the value of spies and good intelligence.

The Battle of Islandhlwana in 1879 showed just how badly the British underestimated the Zulus and how poor their intelligence was. They could not conceive that the Zulu Impi was capable of speed or could surprise a well-armed British army. More recently western intelligence was such that in 2003 Saddam Hussein's military did not stand a chance in the face of invasion. The same went for Colonel Gaddafi's Libyan armed forces in 2011 when NATO conducted a pinpoint air campaign.

Saving the Queen's Colour at the Battle of Islandhlwana





3

**“Thus we may know that there are five essentials for victory:**

1. He will win who knows when to fight and when not to fight.
  2. He will win who knows how to handle both superior and inferior forces.
  3. He will win whose army is animated by the same spirit throughout all its ranks.
  4. He will win who, prepared himself, waits to take the enemy unprepared.
  5. He will win who has military capacity and is not interfered with by the sovereign.
- Victory lies in the knowledge of these five points”**

This very succinctly summarises what it takes to be a successful general – choose your battles carefully and be prepared. His last point is perhaps the most telling, because it argues generals should be given a free hand and not be shackled by politicians. By 1943 the German Army was failing on both these counts. Hitler’s insistence on micro-managing the war effectively hamstrung his generals – or so they would like us to believe. Certainly his insistence on not giving ground denied them the initiative on many occasions.

The fate of Hitler’s Army Group Centre was a classic example of this – when unable to retreat or counterattack it was smashed by Stalin’s Operation Bagration.

*Field Marshal Friedrich von Paulus surrendering after his troops were besieged at Stalingrad*



4

**“Ground on which we can only be saved from destruction by fighting without delay, is desperate ground”**

This always strikes a chord with all military historians. You just have to think of desperate battles such as Thermopylae, Waterloo, Rorke’s Drift, Stalingrad, Normandy and Arnhem to appreciate the significance of this maxim. More modern examples include Dien Bien Phu and Khe Sanh. In all these, armies had to fight or face complete annihilation.



*Marines man the fortified perimeter of Khe Sanh, South Vietnam, near the Demilitarized Zone*

5

**“In the practical art of war, the best thing of all is to take the enemy’s country whole and intact; to shatter and destroy it is not so good. So, too, it is better to capture an army entire than to destroy it, to capture a regiment, a detachment or a company entire than to destroy them”**

This maxim shows great wisdom. Sun Tzu did not believe in what became known as total war. He argued that it was more important to win the war than battles. He was writing at a time when warfare was about capturing resources, but this is still an important lesson today. Modern warfare does its utmost to avoid civilian casualties. Famous examples of capturing entire armies include Beda Fomm, Bataan, Singapore and Falaise.

*British marines landed at the beach at Gallipoli, Turkey, 1915*



6

**“In battle, there are not more than two methods of attack – the direct and the indirect; yet these two in combination give rise to an endless series of manoeuvres”**

This is one of the most controversial maxims. In tactical terms on the battlefield they equate to frontal and flanking attacks. The most successful combinations were the oblique attack and the double envelopment. However, in strategic terms the indirect approach can result in a serious dissipation of effort. Churchill was a major advocate of an indirect strategy, embodied in the disastrous Gallipoli campaign, of which he was a supporter. Subsequently he supported the indirect approach with operations in Norway and Italy, during WWII. He was convinced that a thrust through Italy was the best way to reach Germany. Instead the Germans fought an exemplary rear-guard campaign in the Italian mountains.



7 “Thus, what enables the wise sovereign and the good general to strike and conquer, and achieve things beyond the reach of ordinary men, is foreknowledge”

We all know the saying ‘forewarned is forearmed’. The value of intelligence in warfare is paramount. Get it wrong and you lose. For example, at Waterloo Napoleon’s intelligence on Prussian intentions was wholly wrong. He believed that Marshal Blucher was marching away from Wellington not toward him. This miscalculation cost him the battle. The surprise Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor represents one of the worst intelligence failures in history– this though was surpassed by 9/11.

On the evening of the Battle of Waterloo by Ernest Crofts. The French army retiring from the battlefield, with Napoleon leaving his carriage and preparing to mount his horse



8 “Now the general who wins a battle makes many calculations in his temple ere the battle is fought. The general who loses a battle makes but few calculations beforehand. Thus do many calculations lead to victory, and few calculations to defeat: how much more no calculation at all! It is by attention to this point that I can foresee who is likely to win or lose”

Now every general knows the value of detailed planning. The greatest example of this is Operation Overlord and D-Day – the Allies planned for every eventuality and it paid off on 6 June 1944. Not only did they successfully gain a foothold in Normandy, they only suffered a quarter of the casualties anticipated. In stark contrast, Operation Market Garden and the bid to grab Arnhem bridge, was poorly conceived from start to finish and ended in failure.

Soldiers of the British 11th Parachute Battalion surrendering in 1944



Thanks to successful ‘psy ops’ Saddam Hussein’s Republican Guard didn’t put up much of a fight

9 “Hence to fight and conquer in all your battles is not supreme excellence; supreme excellence consists in breaking the enemy’s resistance without fighting”

This is very astute, because in many ways war represents a failure of diplomacy. Sun Tzu understood the strategy of bending your enemy to your will. Today we know this as ‘psy ops’ or psychological warfare. Notably in 2003 Saddam’s Republican Guard did not resist the coalition’s invasion because they had already been convinced that resistance was futile.

Sun Tzu’s *The Art Of War Illustrated Edition* is on sale now, with a new commentary by Anthony Tucker-Jones, available from:

[www.bloomsbury.com](http://www.bloomsbury.com)

10 “Thus the highest form of generalship is to baulk the enemy’s plans; the next best is to prevent the junction of the enemy’s forces; the next in order is to attack the enemy’s army in the field; and the worst policy of all is to besiege walled cities”

This encapsulates many of Sun Tzu’s maxims. He cautioned against dividing an army, against fighting long wars and was an advocate of what we call manoeuvre warfare. Although Napoleon was a master at this, he also regularly committed the cardinal sin of dividing his armies. Hitler took Austria and Czechoslovakia without fighting, but when it came to Poland he knew he would have to resort to arms. Hitler’s generals understood manoeuvre warfare when they conducted the remarkable campaigns of 1939-41. Sun Tzu cautioned against sieges because they were costly, however in 1940 Hitler simply went round the French Maginot Line.

German troops enter the Sudetenland in Czechoslovakia in 1939



Images: Alamy, Getty



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Great Battles

# POLTAVA

Swedish King Charles XII's poorly executed invasion of Russia during the Great Northern War led to a stunning defeat by a resurgent Russian army

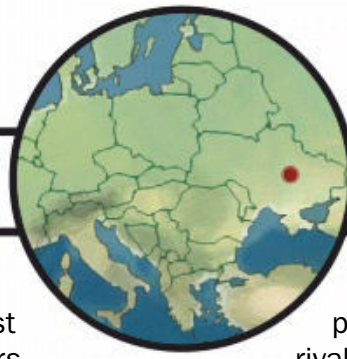
WORDS WILLIAM E. WELSH

*Czar Peter the Great rallies his troops in the face of the Swedish attack at Poltava*





## COSSACK HETMANATE (MODERN-DAY UKRAINE)



27 JUNE 1709

**A**s the first rays of dawn appeared over the Vorskla Valley in the Cossack Hetmanate at 4.00am on 27 June 1709, Russian cannons in a south-facing redoubt fired their gun into a blurry mass of Swedish infantry advancing towards them. The shots carried off the heads of a Swedish captain, two grenadiers, and four musketeers in the front rank.

The Russians were soon engulfed in a sea of 7,000 blue-jacketed Swedish infantry moving rapidly north. The Swedish grenadiers and musketeers in the centre column slammed headlong into the first of six redoubts arrayed in a vertical line in the middle of the main road, leading away from Poltava. The left and right columns of the Swedish foot, however, swung wide around the redoubts in a rush to reach the open ground in front of the fortified Russian camp just north of the besieged town of Poltava.

The Swedes used the cold steel of their bayonets to overrun the first and second redoubts. The attackers swept over the low walls of the earthworks and bayoneted the hapless Russians inside. As the sun broke full over the horizon, the Swedish attack seemed to be off to an auspicious start.

### Northern Union

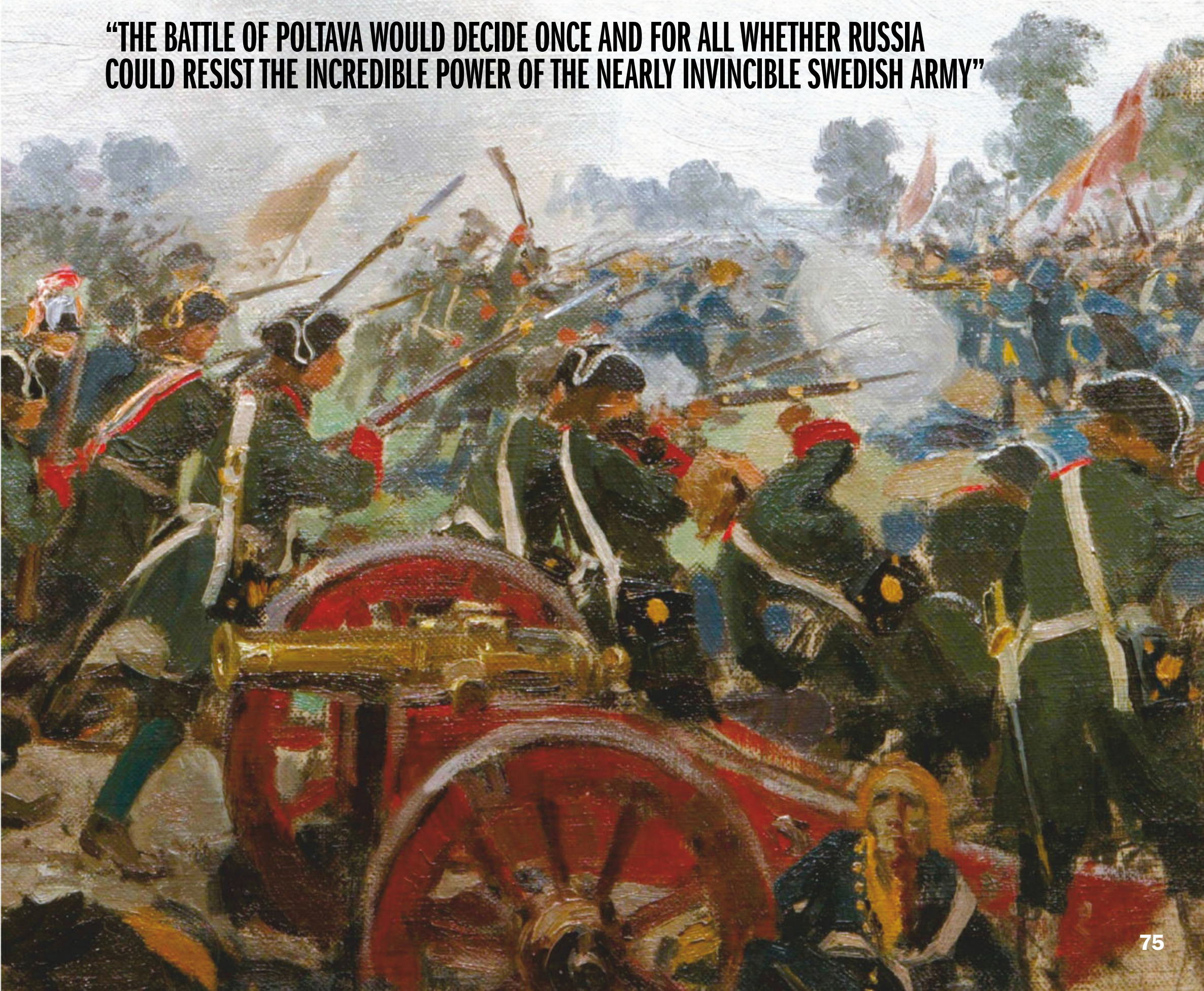
The Battle of Poltava would decide once and for all whether Russia could resist the incredible power of the nearly invincible Swedish army that had dominated northeastern Europe in the aftermath of the Thirty Years' War and transformed the Baltic Sea into a 'Swedish Lake' by annexing Pomerania, Livonia, and Estonia. Yet the Swedish Empire was overextended and its population was eclipsed by its rivals. At the start of the 18th century, Sweden had only 1.5 million people whereas Russia had eight million.

Swedish King Charles XII assumed power at the age of 15 in 1697. The rival rulers of Denmark, Poland, and Russia all saw advantage to be gained by striking quick against the young monarch before he had mastered control of the Swedish army. They forged a triple alliance known as the Northern Union and moved against Swedish possessions in February 1700.

The members of the alliance soon found that they had sorely misjudged the military shrewdness and audacity of their youthful enemy. Charles vowed revenge against King Frederick IV of Denmark, King Augustus II of Poland-Saxony, and Tsar Peter I of Russia. The young king, who perpetuated the long-standing Swedish tradition of campaigning in person, resolved to defeat Denmark, Poland, and Russia in that order.

Charles was averse to dividing his forces, and therefore planned to focus on defeating

**“THE BATTLE OF POLTAVA WOULD DECIDE ONCE AND FOR ALL WHETHER RUSSIA COULD RESIST THE INCREDIBLE POWER OF THE NEARLY INVINCIBLE SWEDISH ARMY”**





## GREAT BATTLES

one enemy at a time. Denmark fell easily enough in the summer of 1700. Charles found himself forced into confronting the Russians unexpectedly when the Polish-Saxon army besieged Riga in Livonia at the same time that the Russians besieged Narva in Estonia. The Swedish warrior king landed 8,000 troops on 1 October at Pernau in Livonia, intent on relieving Riga. When the Polish-Saxon army hastily quit Livonia, Charles decided to relieve the beleaguered Swedish garrison at Narva.

### Swedish victory at Narva

King Charles faced a formidable foe in Tsar Peter I, who was ten years his senior. Standing six feet seven inches tall, the Russian tsar inspired his troops by his mere presence in battle.

At the outbreak of the war, the poorly trained Russian army was no match for Sweden's veteran forces. Peter, though, already had begun building a new model army along Western European lines. He possessed a core of elite guard units that served as a blueprint for new regiments that he raised, equipped, and trained during the conflict. Between the battles of Narva and Poltava, Peter recruited approximately 138,000 soldiers.

In contrast to their Western European counterparts, though, both the Swedish and Russian infantry regiments still had a core of pikemen. Infantry battalions of both armies were composed of one-third pikes and two-thirds muskets. The musketeers of both armies possessed flintlocks and ring bayonets. Charles's Swedish army heavily relied on shock action in the form of the cold steel of their bayonets. While highly effective if the element of surprise was achieved, it was a risky tactic against a prepared enemy that was braced for a bayonet charge.

On 21 November Charles's troops fought their way into the Russian fortified camp at Narva in a driving snowstorm. The Russian army surrendered, and the survivors were allowed to march home. Tsar Peter was in Moscow at the time of the attack. Having freed Livonia and Estonia of enemy forces, Charles turned his attention to defeating Poland over the course of the next five years. He then turned his attention back to Russia.

### Invasion of Russia

Charles invaded Russia in January 1708. The audacious Swedish king's strategy was to seize Moscow and overthrow Peter. As for Tsar Peter, he planned to trade space for time. As the Swedish army turned east, the tsar unleashed legions of Cossacks and Kalmucks to lay waste to the corridor leading to Moscow through which the Swedes advanced.

Charles encamped for three months northwest of Minsk from March to June to resupply his army. When he resumed his march, he defeated a Russian army led by field marshals Boris Sheremetev and Alexander Menshikov on 3 June in the Battle of Holowczyn. This time, though, the Russians disengaged in good order and did not surrender as they had at Narva.

As a remedy for his army's chronic shortage of provisions, Charles ordered General Carl Lewenhaupt, commanding the Swedish army in Livonia, to gather as much gunpowder and as

*The Swedish army proved no match for the superior numbers of the Russian army*



**“PETER, THOUGH, ALREADY HAD BEGUN BUILDING A NEW MODEL ARMY ALONG WESTERN EUROPEAN LINES. HE POSSESSED A CORE OF ELITE GUARD UNITS THAT SERVED AS A BLUEPRINT FOR NEW REGIMENTS THAT HE RAISED, EQUIPPED, AND TRAINED DURING THE CONFLICT”**





*Charles XII of Sweden  
and Ivan Mazepa after  
the Battle of Poltava*



## OPPOSING FORCES



### SWEDISH ARMY

COMMANDER: Charles XII,  
King of Sweden

INFANTRY: 8,200

CAVALRY: 10,800

ARTILLERY: 4

VS



### RUSSIAN ARMY

COMMANDER: Peter I,  
Tsar of Russia

INFANTRY: 33,000

CAVALRY: 9,000

ARTILLERY: 100



# POLTAVA 1709

## 01 FIRST BLOOD

A battalion of Russian fusiliers of the Belgorodsky Regiment put up a heroic defence of the triangular-shaped third redoubt astride the main road leading north from Poltava. One thousand Russian musketeers in the third redoubt stalled the attack of the Swedes.

## 02 MOUNTED MELEE

Both sides committed all of their cavalry to the first phase of the battle at the redoubts. A total of 20,000 horsemen became involved in a swirling melee with clanging swords and crashing pistols around the redoubts. The Russian cavalry withdrew north to the Tachtaulova Stream pursued by the Swedish cavalry.

## 03 ABORTED ATTACK

Swedish General Adam Ludwig Lewenhaupt was preparing to storm the Russian camp with his division when he received orders to immediately march northwest to join the main army. Lewenhaupt was furious that he had to abort his attack because he had hoped to carry the thinly held south wall of the Russian camp.

## 04 COMBINED ARMS STRIKE

From the ramparts of the Russian camp, Tsar Peter observed two Swedish infantry divisions unite opposite the Russian camp. Seeing battle smoke to the south at the redoubts, he dispatched five infantry battalions and five dragoon squadrons to destroy the Swedish division at the redoubts.

## 05 ARTILLERY HELL

The Russians had 70 guns in their fortified camp. Russian heavy guns pummelled the Swedish infantry forming up opposite the Russian camp, decapitating heads, severing arms and legs, and tearing open chests and abdomens of the Swedish horsemen and musketeers.

CHARLES'S 2ND POSITION

PETER'S COUNTERATTACK

CHARLES'S 1ST POSITION

POLTAVA

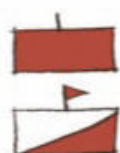
Swedish Works



Swedish Infantry



Swedish Cavalry



Russian Infantry

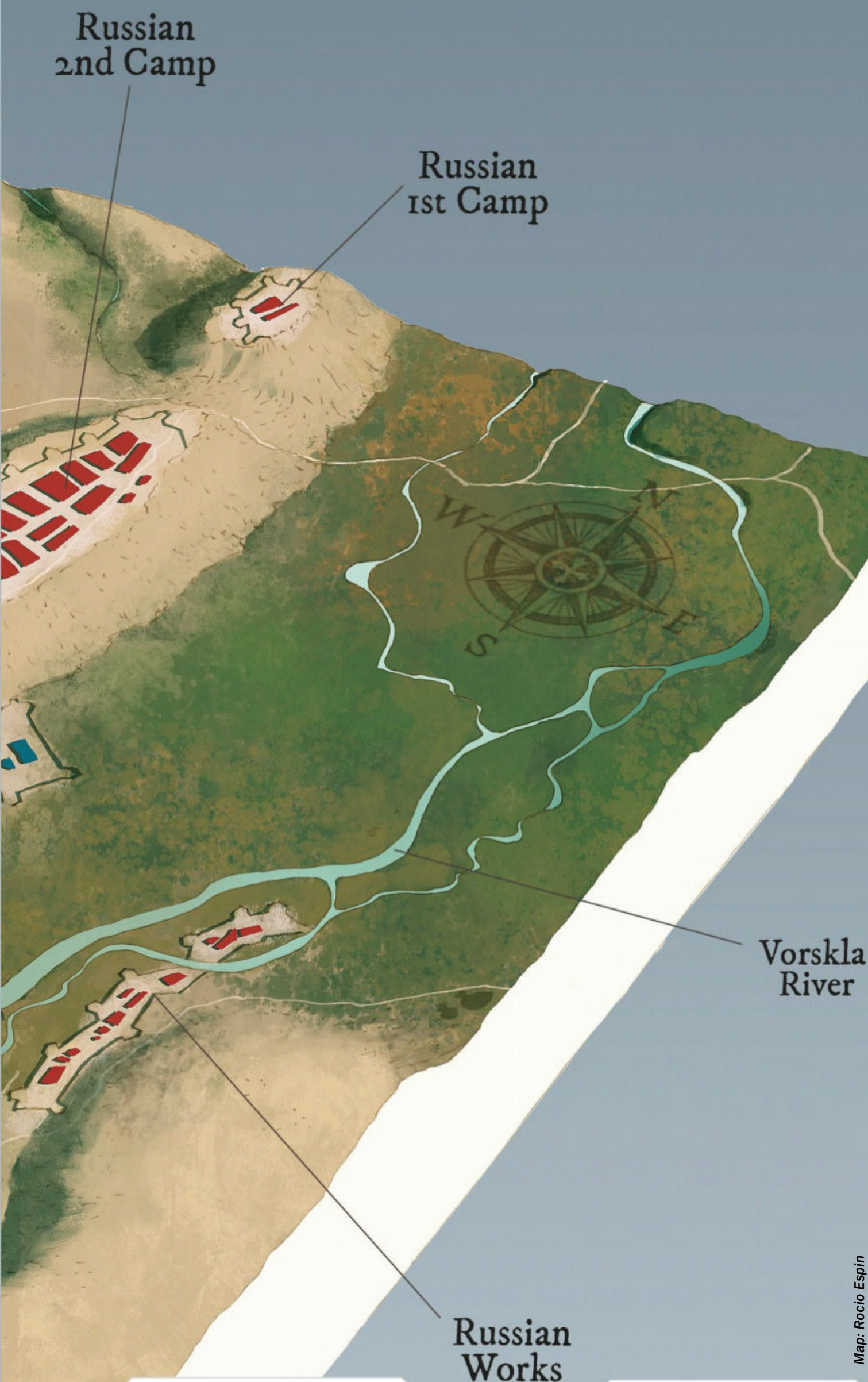


Russian Cavalry

## 06 FINAL FACE-OFF

Peter ordered 24,000 of the 33,000 Russian foot soldiers inside the fortified Russian camp to march onto the mile-wide plain to the west to lure the Swedes to attack. The Russian infantry formed themselves into two ranks with cavalry on the wings.





## 07 BAYONET CHARGE

Lewenhaupt formed his infantry in a single line and charged the overlapping Russian infantry lines to the east. The Swedish Guards battalions penetrated the first rank of the Russian left wing. However, Russian cannon and musketry on the right wing shredded Swedish horse and foot units alike.

## 08 RUSSIAN COUNTERATTACK

As the Swedish right penetrated the Russian line, a gap opened as the Swedish left crumbled. Tsar Peter sent infantry through the gap to sever the Swedish army at the same time Russian cavalry on the right wing circled behind the Swedish army.

many provisions as possible and rendezvous with him on the west bank of the Dnieper River for the final push to Moscow. Charles waited in vain for Lewenhaupt throughout July, but Lewenhaupt had difficulty marching his lumbering column of 2,000 wagons over hundreds of miles of dirt tracks.

Charles grew impatient and turned south in early August towards the Ukraine where he hoped to find ample food for his army. He did not abandon his plan to capture Moscow, but instead delayed it. In a bid to ensure sufficient supplies, the Swedish king forged an alliance with Cossack Hetman Mazeppa, the leader of the Zaporozhian Cossacks, who promised to furnish men, food, and precious gunpowder.

When Charles turned south towards Cossack lands, a 90-mile gap had opened up between the Swedish main army and Lewenhaupt's army. Peter organised an 8,000-strong flying corps at Moscow and led it east where it intercepted and destroyed Lewenhaupt's lumbering wagon train at Lesnaya on 28-29 September, 1708. The Russians destroyed all of the convoy's wagons and artillery. The battle marked the first time the Russians had defeated the Swedish army in a pitched battle.

Afterwards, Peter cracked down on the Zaporozhian Cossacks in an effort to limit their defection to the Swedes. The Russians burned the Zaporozhian capital of Baturin and slaughtered its civilian population on 2 November. The incident cowed the Cossacks and denied the Swedish army an opportunity to replenish its gunpowder.

## Swedish king wounded

By spring 1709 the tide of the campaign had switched in favour of the Russians. Charles had become obsessed with defeating Peter's forces, and he rejected the suggestion that he either withdraw temporarily to Poland or await Swedish reinforcements scheduled to arrive in late summer. The Swedish king desperately wanted a pitched battle in which he could reinvigorate his army.

On 1 May Charles's 25,000-man army besieged the commercial town of Poltava overlooking the Vorskla River. The Swedes had only enough troops for a partial siege, because they had to keep the bulk of their forces in the field to manoeuvre against Tsar Peter's army. In early June Peter began assembling his 80,000-strong army on the east bank of the Vorskla for the purpose of relieving Poltava.

While reconnoitring south of Poltava, Charles was severely wounded by a musket ball that traversed the length of his foot. Command of the Swedish army devolved to Field Marshal Carl Gustav Rehnskiöld. The Swedes crafted a litter slung between two horses for Charles to accompany the army during its advance to battle. Although Rehnskiöld was competent, he lacked the Charles's charisma and daring.

On June 19 Tsar Peter led his army across the Vorskla north of Poltava. He ordered his troops to build an elaborate fortified camp protected by high earthen walls just three and a half miles north of Poltava.

To prevent a surprise attack by the Swedes, he ordered his troops to construct six redoubts 300 yards apart in a north-south line and

Map: Rocio Espin



*Russian and Swedish cavalry engage in a grand melee with sabres and pistols*



another four redoubts perpendicular to them on the north side. The foot soldiers manning the redoubts would slow the Swedish advance. Most of the redoubts held between 100 to 300 men and one or two guns, but the third redoubt from the south housed 1,000 men.

## Clash at the redoubts

The Swedish infantry arrayed in five columns of battalions marched began their attack at 4.00am on 27 June. Rehnskiöld intended that the six battalions in the middle column under General Carl Roos would pin down the Russians in the redoubts while the other four columns – two east of the redoubts under Rehnskiöld and two more west of the redoubts under Lewenhaupt – would smash their way through the horizontal line of redoubts and assemble on the mile-wide plain opposite the Russian camp. Rehnskiöld intended that both Roos and Lewenhaupt would rejoin him, but he failed to fully inform them beforehand of his plans. King Charles in his litter accompanied Rehnskiöld.

Rather than breaking off his attack and marching to rejoin the main Swedish army, Roos continued to launch fresh assaults on the largest of the redoubts. He had not understood the nuance of the Swedish plan in which he would only engage the Russians in the redoubts long enough for the Swedish infantry to reach the Russian camp.

When Lewenhaupt veered to the east, Rehnskiöld sent orders instructing him to rejoin the main Swedish army west of the Russian

fort. Once the two wings had joined, Rehnskiöld had two divisions totalling approximately 5,000 infantry. Roos's division, though, was still bogged down at the redoubts.

Roos lost half of his 2,000 troops in three failed assaults against the third redoubt in a 90-minute period. At 6.00am he took up a defensive position as Russian reinforcements with artillery arrived in front of him. Russian dragoons encircled his dwindling force and infantry charged his position. Rehnskiöld sent a small force to try to extricate Roos's division, but the relief force was unable to reach the isolated Swedish troops.

A bloody fight ensued at the redoubts in which soldiers of both sides fought hand-to-hand with pikes, bayonets, and clubbed muskets. When offered the opportunity to surrender at 9.00am, Roos accepted the offer.

## The Russians emerge

The Swedish commanders believed that if they could fight their way into the Russian camp the enemy's greater numbers would be negated by the tight space in the interior of the fort that would make it impossible to manoeuvre and bring their advantage to bear. The technique had worked at Narva, and the Swedes believed they might be able to pull off the same kind of victory again.

Yet, having lost a full division of infantry at the redoubts, Rehnskiöld had second thoughts about attacking the camp. He was on the verge of breaking off the attack and returning

to Poltava when the Russians began emerging from their fort at 8.00am. Encouraged by the realisation he would not have to attack the Russians in a fortified position, Rehnskiöld ordered his troops to wheel into line opposite the Russians.


The Russian first rank contained 14,000 men supported by 35 light field guns. The second line, which functioned as a reserve, had 10,000 men. The tsar ordered light field guns positioned between the 24 battalions in the front rank. The Russian cavalry in bright green uniforms deployed on both wings. As for the tsar, he took up a position astride his dun-coloured Arabian horse with the elite Novgorod Regiment on the Russian left.

## Swedish charge

"You must go and attack the enemy," Lewenhaupt told his foot soldiers just before he ordered them forward at 10.00am. "Bear yourself with honour in his majesty's service." Upon his order, drummers beat the signal for attack. The crack Swedish troops surged forward with fixed bayonets. To protect the infantry against the overlapping ranks of Russian musketeers, the Swedish cavalry moved into position to guard the flanks of the thin Swedish battle line.

Although suffering from hunger and disease, the 5,000 Swedish foot soldiers rose to the herculean task that confronted them given that they were outnumbered by nearly five to one. Lewenhaupt's best chance of success lay





*King Charles XII was confined to a litter owing to a foot wound, and therefore exerted no control over the battle*

**“ALTHOUGH SUFFERING FROM HUNGER AND DISEASE, THE 5,000 SWEDISH FOOT SOLDIERS ROSE TO THE HERCULEAN TASK THAT CONFRONTED THEM GIVEN THAT THEY WERE OUTNUMBERED BY NEARLY FIVE TO ONE”**

in bringing superior force to bear against one section of the Russian line in order to shatter it. As the Swedes swept forward, Russian cannons in the frontline roared. Heavier guns on the ramparts of the fort fired shells that arced over the Russian foot and landed among the Swedes who had less than a handful of guns with which to reply. The close-range fire tore gaps in the Swedish line carrying away swaths of bluecoats. Despite the hellish cannon and musket fire, the Swedes came on in grand fashion.

The Swedish Guards battalions on the right side of the Swedish line punched their way through the first rank of Russians and continued on to engage the second rank of green-coated enemy infantry. Yet on the other end of the field, the Russian right pushed back the Swedish left.

As a result, a wide gap ripe for exploitation by the Russians developed between the Swedish left and right wings. Peter, who had been shouting encouragement to the troops on the Russian left, ordered the Russian infantry in the centre of the field to exploit the gap.

Lewenhaupt had hoped that Major General Carl Gustav Creutz’s cavalry on the Swedish right would be able to exploit the breach in the Russian first rank made by the Swedish foot guards, but Menshikov’s unrelenting dragoons checked the advance of their Swedish counterparts. Lewenhaupt watched in horror as the steady Russian ranks on Peter’s right wing overwhelmed the Swedish left. The Russian cannon and musketry shot through the Swedish foot and horse on the north side of the field.

The bulk of the Swedish cavalry could not withstand the hailstorm of iron and lead to assist the infantry. Fifty mounted horsemen of the elite Swedish Life Guards made a suicidal charge in an effort to cover the infantry’s retreat. Russian musketeers who sensed victory swarmed around the horsemen stabbing them with their bayonets and dragging them from their saddles. On the other end of the field, Russian dragoons worked their way around the Swedish left flank and wrought havoc in the rear of the Swedish army.

Lewenhaupt rode forward to try to stave off the disaster that unfolded before his eyes. “I begged, threatened, cursed, and hit out, but all was in vain,” he recalled. With defeat hanging in the air like a heavy fog, Charles had no choice

but to leave the field. Only three members of his escort remained, and they led him south to safety. Rehnskiöld was captured in the press, but Lewenhaupt escaped. “There is nothing to do but to try to collect the remains of our people,” Charles remarked.

**Final surrender**

The butcher’s bill was heavy for the Swedes. They lost 7,000 killed and wounded and 3,000 captured. As for the Russians, they suffered 4,500 casualties. After the battle, Charles called from their various outposts and missions his screening forces and his siege forces.

Charles still had 15,000 Swedish troops and 6,000 Cossacks. Abandoning Poltava, the Swedish army marched 12 miles south. With Rehnskiöld captured, Lewenhaupt took command of the army. Charles escaped south to Ottoman lands. Owing to the poor condition of the Swedish army and the encirclement by Russian forces, Lewenhaupt surrendered on 30 June.

The Battle of Poltava was a decisive Russian victory and a major turning point in the war. It marked the advent of Russia on the European stage as a major power. Through the Treaty of Nystad in 1721 Russia gained Estonia and Livonia from Sweden.

Peter took the title of emperor, Russia became the dominant power in Eastern Europe, and the Baltic Sea eventually became a ‘Russian Lake’. In the aftermath of the Great Northern War, Sweden was relegated to being a second-rate military power.



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MUSEUM SHIP HMS CAROLINE WAS PRESENT  
AT THE CLIMACTIC 1916 NAVAL CLASH



**HISTORY  
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# THE BLACK PRINCE

## CHIVALROUS HERO OR EMBODIMENT OF “ULTRAVIOLENCE”?

**In a recent article on HistoryAnswers.co.uk, History of War suggested that the Prince of Wales had a far from gentlemanly reputation, and was perhaps all too at home with the brutal side of medieval life. Historian Michael Jones jumped to the prince's aid, and challenged the article on Twitter (@HistoryofWarMag). Here is his rebuttal**

**T**he camera sweeps across the chaos of battle. Volleys of arrows are unloosed. Horses roll on the ground in agony. Newsreel type headings flash across the screen. This is “the war of the century”, and “God is on our side”. We are transported back to 14th century France and the opening clash of the Hundred Years War. And it is brought to life with frightening immediacy.

Anthony Burgess was fresh from the success of his novel, *A Clockwork Orange*, its “ultraviolence” – the pursuit of brutal, senseless killing – shocked and disturbed its readers, and was rendered into a powerful film. Now he had a new project. Burgess, in a 90 page screenplay, had turned his attention from an imagined dystopian future to the historical past. His intended subject was one of England's great warriors, Edward of Woodstock, the oldest son of King Edward III – known to posterity by his nickname, the Black Prince. Burgess envisaged an immersive cinematic portrayal of medieval mayhem.

The Black Prince was a hero to his contemporaries. They saw him as brave, generous, a consummate warrior. Above all, he was regarded as an exemplar of chivalry – and even his enemies praised him for it. The Prince won his spurs at the age of 16, fighting with remarkable courage at the battle of Crécy (1346), the great victory of his father, Edward III, against the French. Ten years later, by now a commander in his own right, he won a stunning triumph at Poitiers, capturing the French king, Jean II. Observers were impressed by the Black Prince's resolute leadership during the battle and his gracious treatment of his French prisoners in its aftermath. And when his army crossed the Pyrenees in the middle of winter to destroy a Franco-Castilian force at Nájera (in 1367), one awe-struck chronicler, Henry of Knighton, said simply, “It was the greatest battle to have taken place in our times.”

Anthony Burgess had a different agenda. Realising that chivalry was an elite aristocratic code, one that showed scant regard for the well-being of humbler combatants or civilians caught in its path, his focus was on the relentless violence and cruelty of the age, and how it might corrupt even the most valiant of warriors. At the onset of Burgess's story,

the Black Prince is a handsome young knight favoured by fortune. At its close, he is a sinner wracked by disease, desperately seeking the forgiveness of God. Burgess's script was never developed into a film but has recently inspired a striking novel by Adam Roberts. Roberts's *The Black Prince* invites us to see the past through fresh eyes, posing the stark question: was the Prince a chivalrous hero from a bygone age or instead, the embodiment of “ultraviolence”?

**“THE BLACK PRINCE  
WAS A HERO TO HIS  
CONTEMPORARIES. THEY SAW  
HIM AS BRAVE, GENEROUS, A  
CONSUMMATE WARRIOR. ABOVE  
ALL, HE WAS REGARDED AS AN  
EXEMPLAR OF CHIVALRY – AND  
EVEN HIS ENEMIES PRAISED  
HIM FOR IT”**



Recently, one of History of War's articles has argued the latter, believing the Black Prince's chivalric credentials masked an appetite for terrorising innocent civilians. Although the soubriquet ‘Black’ was never used in the Prince's lifetime (the first reference to it only occurs in the 16th century) it is suggested that this may have originated from his pitiless way of fighting. His first independent command (in 1355) did indeed cut a swathe of devastation across southern France, with the chronicler Geoffrey le Baker grimly listing the many villages “burnt to ashes”. His last, 15 years later, culminated, according to Jean Froissart, in a brutal massacre of the inhabitants of Limoges.

Yet we must be careful about imposing our outlook upon an era that held very different values from our own. In the 14th century, an opponent's lands and those who worked on

them were a legitimate target, either to goad him to battle or destroy the wealth that enabled him to recruit an army. In launching his plundering raids the Black Prince was following accepted military practice of the time (the Scots had done the same in northern England in 1327 as had his father, Edward III, in the Cambrésis in 1339), however distasteful it may seem to us. And even if we accept that Froissart's account of the sack of Limoges by a vengeful prince contains an element of truth – and I have argued elsewhere that it is more likely pure fiction – the medieval laws of war allowed for a city that had broken its solemn oath of allegiance to be punished in such terrible fashion.

Chivalry in the Middle Ages was a flawed and sometimes contradictory belief system. But at its best it motivated men to fight with courage and honour. In contrast, Adam Roberts's *The Black Prince*, drawing upon Burgess's fascination with violence, creates a cast of characters brutalised or traumatised by war. The chivalrous Poitevin nobleman Guichard d'Angle, a member of the Order of the Garter and tutor to the prince's young son Richard of Bordeaux (the future Richard II), becomes a robotic killing machine, disposing of hapless civilians as if he were chopping wood.

Others have lost all sense of feeling and become emotionally numb. It is said of the Black Prince's beautiful wife, Joan of Kent, that the thought her husband might die “left her feeling unmoved, and the thought that he was going to live left her feeling unmoved”. Yet the Chandos Herald remembered Joan going into premature labour out of sheer anxiety for her husband's safety before the start of the Spanish campaign of 1367. He also recalled that when he returned home unharmed, she was standing at the gates of Bordeaux to greet him and the couple kissed and embraced in front of the whole army.

In the late 14th century, writers did indeed discuss whether the profession of soldiery had become debased by constant fighting. However, the Black Prince's conduct was universally praised. A chronicler at the court of Charles V of France said simply, “Notwithstanding the fact that he was our enemy, he was one of the greatest and best knights ever seen.” In the midst of our current fascination with “ultraviolence”, we should perhaps remember these words.

Michael Jones is the author of *The Black Prince* (Head of Zeus, 2017) and is a member of the Royal Historical Society and the British Commission for Military History.



Heraldic badge: RS Nourse





The Black Prince  
at the Battle of  
Poitiers in 1356



# MUSEUMS & EVENTS

Explore Scotland's unique Victoria Crosses, Belfast's WWI cruiser and the quest to preserve cannons from England's republican experiment



*Constructed on a headland, Fort George is based on a distinctive star design, which has remained unaltered down the centuries*

## REMEMBERING SCOTLAND'S — VC VALOUR —

**The Highlanders' Museum is displaying 16 original Victoria Crosses from its huge collections for the first time**

The Highlanders' Museum near Inverness is the largest regimental museum in the Highlands and the second largest in Scotland. It is located within Fort George, which was built between 1748-57 in the aftermath of the Jacobite rebellions. This formidable fortress remains in continuous use as a British Army barracks but is also open to visitors. Spanning over 250 years of history, the Highlanders' Museum covers much of the social and economic history that has shaped Highland culture up to the present day.

It also holds one of the largest military collections that holds "Nationally Recognised Collection Status" and is administered on behalf of the Scottish government. Over 55,000 artefacts are archived, which include 16 Victoria Crosses that were won by soldiers who fought for Highland regiments. Until recently replicas of these valuable medals were displayed while the originals were securely stored. Nevertheless, after much consideration the Highlanders' Museum has decided to permanently display the real VCs.

The 16 medals were awarded to both officers and soldiers from the 72nd Ross-shire Buffs, 78th Highlanders, Seaforth Highlanders and the Queen's Own Cameron Highlanders. The oldest dates back to 29 July 1857 and four of the medals belong to local men who were born in the Highlands and Moray Area: Major John Mackenzie, Lieutenant Herbert MacPherson, Sergeant Alexander Edwards and Sergeant George Sellar.

An unveiling event was held on Friday 5 April 2019, which was attended by the descendents of the VC winners and included a special address by Donald Cameron of Lochiel, the Chief of Clan Cameron. This event was followed by the display of the medals on the ground floor of the museum on the weekend of 6-7 April as part of the Fort George 250th Anniversary celebrations. They are now on permanent display within the museum. Kirstin Mackay, the museum director states, "It is an honour to display the

real Victoria Crosses at the Highlanders' Museum. The story behind each of these men shows tremendous bravery in the face of true adversity. This is an invaluable part of Highland history and we are proud to have these Victoria Crosses in our collection."

Similarly, Maurice Gibson, the chairman of the Highlanders' Museum Board has said, "Very few museums are in the position we are in, being able to display so many unique and priceless artefacts awarded for "conspicuous bravery". It makes mere mortals like me fully appreciate what these very brave men went through as they went about their business in the heat of battle."

**FOR MORE INFORMATION: [WWW.THEHIGHLANDERSMUSEUM.COM](http://WWW.THEHIGHLANDERSMUSEUM.COM)**



*A pair of pipers play at the inaugural event of the medals' display, 5 April 2019*



Before it was decommissioned, HMS Caroline was the second-oldest ship in Royal Navy service after HMS Victory

FOR MORE INFORMATION VISIT: [WWW.NMRN.ORG.UK](http://WWW.NMRN.ORG.UK)



## THE FLOATING JUTLAND SURVIVOR

Belfast is the home of the WWI museum ship HMS Caroline, one of the Royal Navy's longest serving vessels

HMS Caroline was one of eight C-class light cruisers that were ordered under the British Admiralty's 1913-14 construction programme. Commissioned on 4 December 1914, Caroline undertook regular North Sea patrols as well as convoy screening during WWI.

As part of the Grand Fleet's 4th Light Cruiser Squadron, it also fought at the Battle of Jutland and is the sole surviving ship from the battle. Since 1924, Caroline has been based in Belfast

where it has variously served as a training ship and headquarters. It was only decommissioned in 2011 and is now preserved by the National Museum of the Royal Navy.

Caroline has much to offer to visitors including a dockside museum about how it has played an important part of Belfast's maritime life for 95 years. Once aboard ship, visitors can see a film about the Battle of Jutland, a virtual access suite, state-of-the-art exhibits and a mess deck

café. Re-created historic spaces are dated to how Caroline looked in 1914 and include the captain's quarters, marines' mess, sick bay and engine rooms. The top deck can also be walked on and features replica 6-inch and 4-inch guns as well as the navigating bridge.

Free parking is available on site for both cars and coach parties and visitors can save 20 per cent on their ticket purchases if they book online.

## SALVAGING 17TH CENTURY CANNONS

The Royal Armouries is holding a talk about the conservation efforts to preserve the guns of HMS London

The Royal Armouries museum at Fort Nelson, Hampshire, has launched a series of conservation talks with conservator Matthew Hancock. Visitors are invited to join Hancock for a free 30-minute talk at 12pm on 9 June 2019 on "The Marine Salvage Project", which is one of the major conservation projects currently being carried out at the fort. There will also be additional talks on 8 September and 8 December 2019.

The focus of the talk is the conservation of the guns of the 17th century ship HMS London. Built in 1656 for the Republican Commonwealth, London was one of the ships that escorted Charles II back to England during the Restoration. However, she was sunk in 1665 after a mysterious explosion that killed 300 of her crew.

The wreck was rediscovered in 2005 and the salvage focuses on three 17th century guns: two from HMS London and a drake gun recovered from the Goodwin Sands. All require technical conservation treatment but the guns are important for our understanding of naval history.

Hancock explains, "HMS London was originally fitted out with bronze guns and one of those we are examining bears the Commonwealth arms of Oliver Cromwell. This is convincing evidence of wealth and power lined up along the decks of the

warship and promising devastating firepower. We are fortunate that the conservation project at the fort uses the very latest technology enabling us to answer questions that really help with our interpretation and understanding of the collection."



One of the recovered guns from HMS London

FOR MORE INFORMATION VISIT: [WWW.ROYALARMOURIES.ORG](http://WWW.ROYALARMOURIES.ORG)



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# IMPERIAL WAR MUSEUMS MARKS THE 75<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY OF D-DAY

Take part in the commemorations of this world-changing event with a range of limited-edition gifts. Every purchase helps the stories of this incredible operation to be retold, and supports IWM's crucial work



**O**peration Overlord, the codename given to the Allied invasion of German-occupied Western Europe in 1944, was arguably the most challenging, complicated and risky military operation in history. It began on 6 June with Operation Neptune, the largest seaborne invasion ever seen, when 156,000 troops crossed the channel by air and sea to land in Normandy. This assault would lay the foundation for the Allied victory on the Western Front, and is now commonly known as D-Day. The battle for Normandy, however, would rage on long after the beaches had been secured.

IWM Shop has launched a limited edition, capsule gift range to mark the 75th anniversary. Detailed with dynamic photography taken from the D-Day landings and facts that reveal the enormity of the operation, these gifts highlight some of the intricate aspects of D-Day.

This highly illustrated book, published to mark the 75th anniversary of D-Day in 2019, reconstructs the historic landings and the resultant battle for Normandy using artefacts, documents, interviews, film, art and photographs from the archives at IWM. Featuring incredible first-hand accounts of the action from those who were there, experience what it was like to live through what was one of the most significant campaigns of the Second World War.

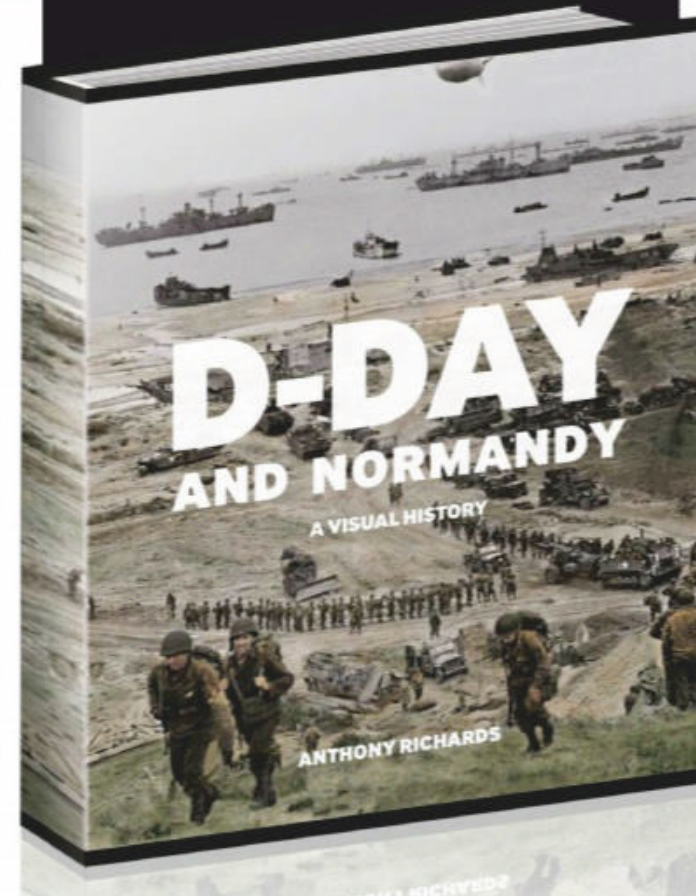
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# HISTORY *of* WAR REVIEWS

Our pick of the latest military history films and books

## RED JOAN

A SPY DRAMA ABOUT JOAN STANLEY, WHOSE SUBURBAN RETIREMENT IS SHATTERED AS SHE IS ARRESTED BY MI5 FOR PROVIDING WAR-TIME INTELLIGENCE TO THE SOVIETS AND SUDDENLY FACES CHARGES OF TREASON

**Director:** Trevor Nunn

**UK Cinematic release:** Out Now

The naivety of youth has a price – as Hitler’s private secretary Traudl Junge came to face in the documentary *Blind Spot*. As it turns out, youthful ignorance, especially in times of war, is not an excuse. After all, Junge was of similar age to fellow German Sophie Scholl, who was executed at the age of 21 in 1943, as a member of the anti-Nazi resistance group, the White Rose – having by then already clearly seen Germany for what it was. Yet whilst the horrors of national socialism are now self evident to all – even today, with the luxury of hindsight, many peoples’ delusions about communism and Stalin’s USSR still persist. As often found in western European discourse and student circles, this continuously rose-tinted view, seemingly blind to the crimes of another totalitarian system, does not often get the examination on screen it requires, and as such, the newly released film *Red Joan* held promising potential.

Inspired by the true story of Melita Norwood, “The Granny Spy” who was exposed as the KGB’s longest serving British agent, *Red Joan* stars Judi Dench, a pensioner suddenly facing possible charges of treason. Awoken from her suburban retirement, she relives her youth in flashbacks, where in 1938 whilst studying physics at Cambridge, the young Joan, played by Sophie Cookson, meets flamboyant new friend Sonya and future love interest Leo, played by Tom Hughes. Instantly seduced by both – and their communist convictions – Joan is blind to Leo and Sonya’s ulterior motives, which are painfully evident from the very start. Yet even after Joan finally sees the “smokescreen” and realises she has been made “a fool” – she nevertheless continues to share classified nuclear bomb secrets with the Soviets, in some self-justified cause, following the devastating bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Joan’s decision to “share” the technology and information is in her self-righteous view ensuring future peace. Not everyone ends up on the right side of history. Not everyone can be a hero.

How do we judge the actions of others, who lived through very different times and situations, which we ourselves have not experienced? Even



if, people accused of past war crimes are today deemed unfit to stand trial due to old age, the subject allows for some interesting questions. Not everyone has the ability, or indeed bravery, of critical self-assessment, introspection or re-evaluation of their own lives and choices – but do they in the dark lonely hours of the night feel

any remorse or regret over their own actions? It would certainly have been interesting to see this subject explored by an actor of Dench's calibre, but unfortunately the film itself falls flat, lacking in both intrigue and tension, and is disappointingly short of any deeper insights or layered reflections. **MB**



# A WOMAN OF NO IMPORTANCE

PURNELL DELVES INTO THE LIFE OF WWII'S "MOST DANGEROUS SPY"

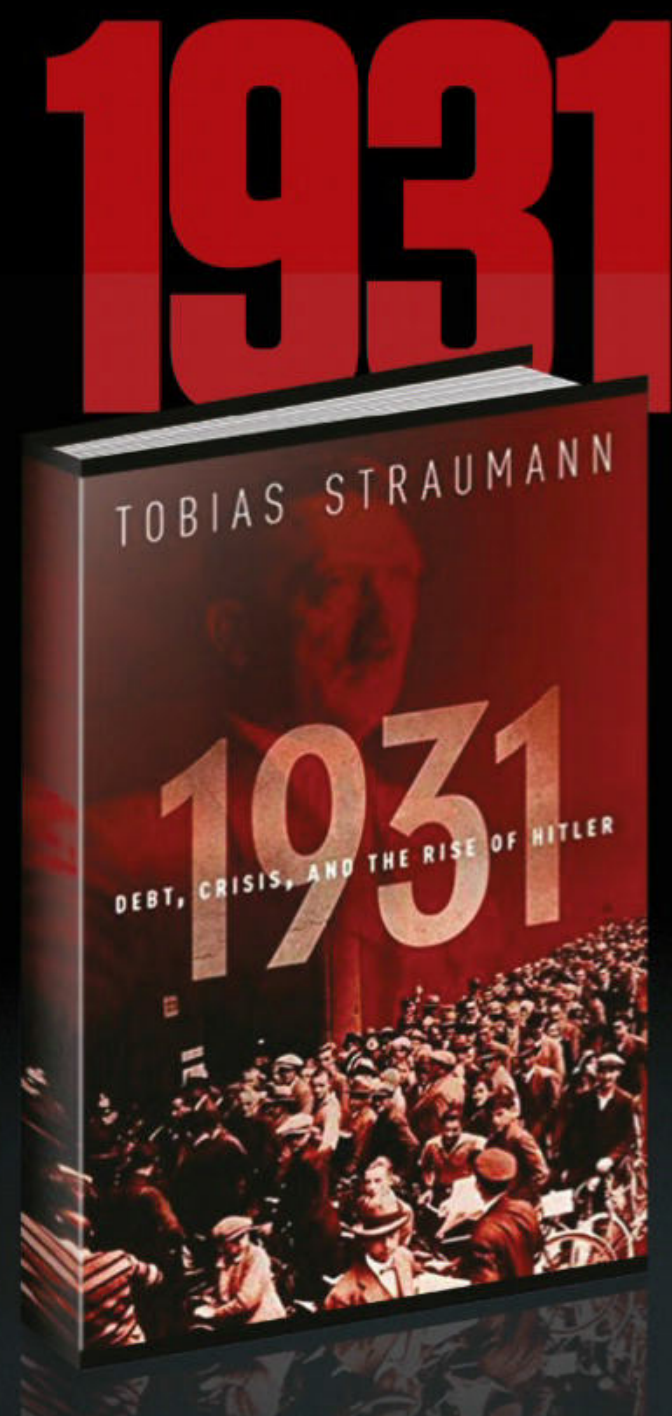
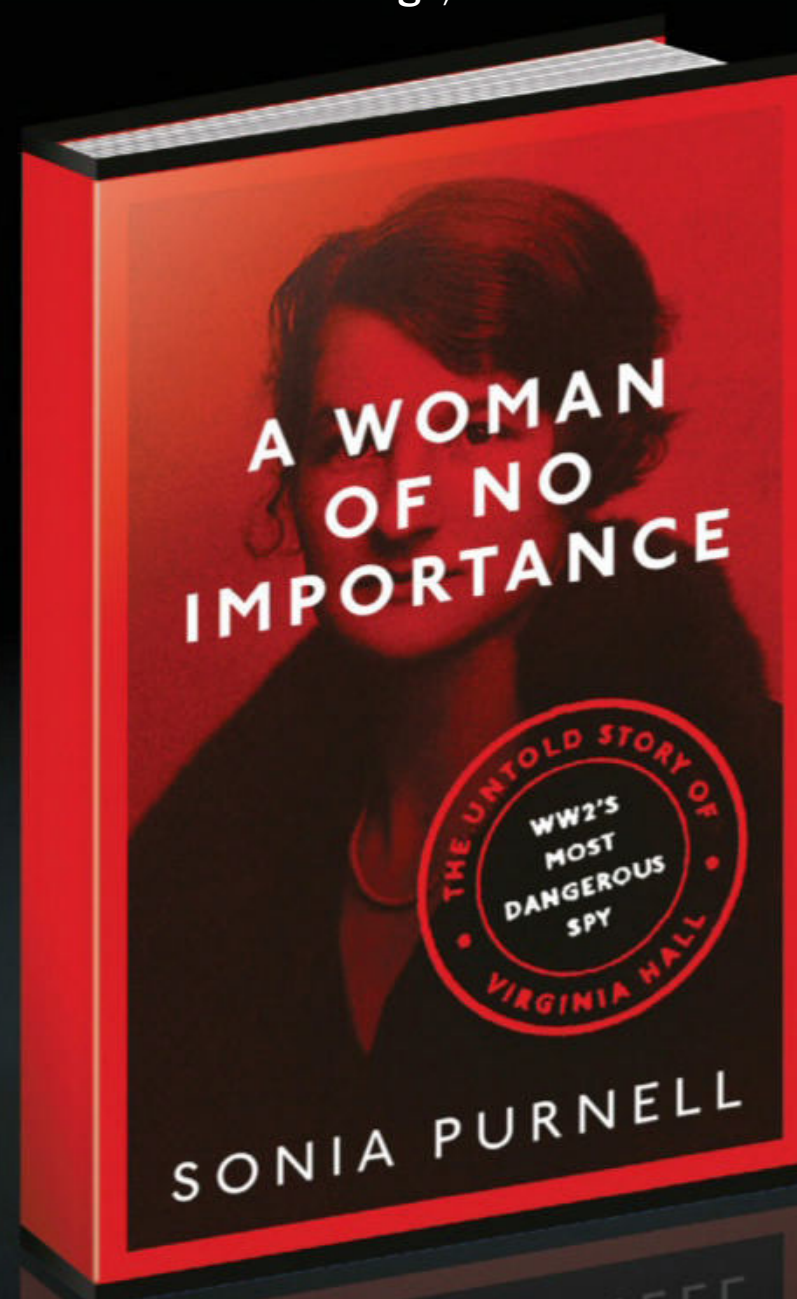
**Author:** Sonia Purnell **Publisher:** Virago, 2019 **Price:** £20.00

The title of this book belies the very real importance of its remarkable protagonist, the wartime secret agent Virginia Hall. Though the claim that Hall was the Second World War's "most dangerous spy" might prove difficult to substantiate, "heroic" and "intrepid" certainly come to mind. It is worth noting, however, that Hall was viewed so great a menace that even one of the Gestapo's most sinister investigators, Hauptsturmführer Klaus Barbie, took a personal interest in her capture. The Germans spared no effort in their search for this elusive American-born agent, known to them as the "limping lady" – a reference to her prosthetic leg – who in 1940 fled Vichy France to volunteer for service with Britain's Special Operations Executive (SOE).

Hall's youth was marked by misfortune, when at the age of 27 she lost her leg in a hunting accident, only four years after her family's considerable fortune was wiped out in the Wall Street crash. During the war, she operated in the shadows, where she was happiest. Even to her closest allies in France, she seemed to have no home or family, merely a burning determination to defeat the Nazis.

Purnell justly acclaims her protagonist's life as one that "drew out into a Homeric tale of adventure, action and seemingly unfathomable courage. The fact that a female guerrilla of her stature remains so little known is incredible". The author has redressed this gap in wartime espionage history with a lively and rigorously-researched narrative. The up-coming film of Hall's life, starring Daisy Ridley is an eagerly-anticipated event. **JS**

**"THE GERMANS SPARED NO EFFORT IN THEIR SEARCH FOR THIS ELUSIVE AMERICAN-BORN AGENT, KNOWN TO THEM AS THE 'LIMPING LADY'"**



## 1931 DEBT, CRISIS, AND THE RISE OF HITLER

A HUGE EFFECTIVE CONSIDERATION OF THE GERMAN FINANCIAL COLLAPSE THAT HELPED THE NAZIS RISE TO POWER

**Author:** Tobias Straumann **Publisher:** Oxford University Press **Price:** £16.99

A book on a financial collapse could easily be dull and dry, but Tobias Straumann has produced what can only be described as a riveting account of the breakdown of the German economy in 1931. The potential pitfalls for such a book are obvious – explaining the intricacies of the financial system without either boring or confusing the reader is far from easy, but Straumann is able to present a highly complex story that is comprehensible and fascinating even for those with little or no understanding of how economies work.

The more recent financial crisis adds to the relevance of this book, while lurking in the background is the sinister shadow of the Nazi Party and Adolph Hitler. The German situation was not a disaster for everyone – the Nazis

were able to use the crisis to further their own aims. The book, in fact, opens with a chilling image of Joseph Goebbels almost dancing with delight as his country collapses, "The Reich is verging on bankruptcy," he gloats, "Our hour approaches with eerie certainty, and we will seize it."

Straumann takes the reader through the failed attempts to stabilise the situation, always considering whether or not more could have been done, but always alive to the constraints faced by the major players. This sympathetic consideration of events lends weight to Straumann's work. He does not claim that the collapse was inevitable, but neither does he insist it could have easily been averted. A fascinating and engrossing book. **DS**



# NORMANDY CRUCIBLE

## THE DECISIVE BATTLE THAT SHAPED WORLD WAR TWO IN EUROPE

A SOLID OVERVIEW OF THE CRITICAL CAMPAIGN TO BREAK  
OUT OF THE NORMANDY BEACHHEADS

**Author:** John Prados **Publisher:** Amberley **Price:** £14.99

The story of D-Day has been told and re-told many times, so much so that many of its details are familiar to even casual military history enthusiasts. The campaign that followed is less well-covered – in fact there is sometimes the impression that D-Day was more or less the end of the war.

John Prados tackles this misperception with a well-written account of the Battle of Normandy, the struggle to break out of the beachheads secured on D-Day and puncture the German defensive line.

The German defenders' performance was little short of heroic following the Allied landings. Though outnumbered and operating with almost no air cover (they were even within range of Allied naval guns for much of the campaign), they stubbornly held their ground. As Allied strength grew with every shipment of men and materiel that was landed, the scales tipped ever more against the Germans. Prados tells the story of the breakout from the beaches, the slow cracking of the German defensive perimeter that gradually gathered an unstoppable momentum, moving smoothly from British, to German to American forces and back again to weave a convincing narrative.

With a firm grasp on the vast complexity of the theatre, Prados has written an engrossing and comprehensible account of this critical phase of the war, in which the Allies found themselves in a race with the forces of Soviet Russia to get to Germany and help shape the future of Europe. **DS**

**“THE GERMAN DEFENDERS’ PERFORMANCE WAS LITTLE  
SHORT OF HEROIC FOLLOWING THE ALLIED LANDINGS”**

## D-DAY: THE LONGEST DAY, 6 JUNE 1944 THE FIRST 24 HOURS

A DISAPPOINTINGLY SKETCHY HISTORY OF THE NORMANDY LANDINGS

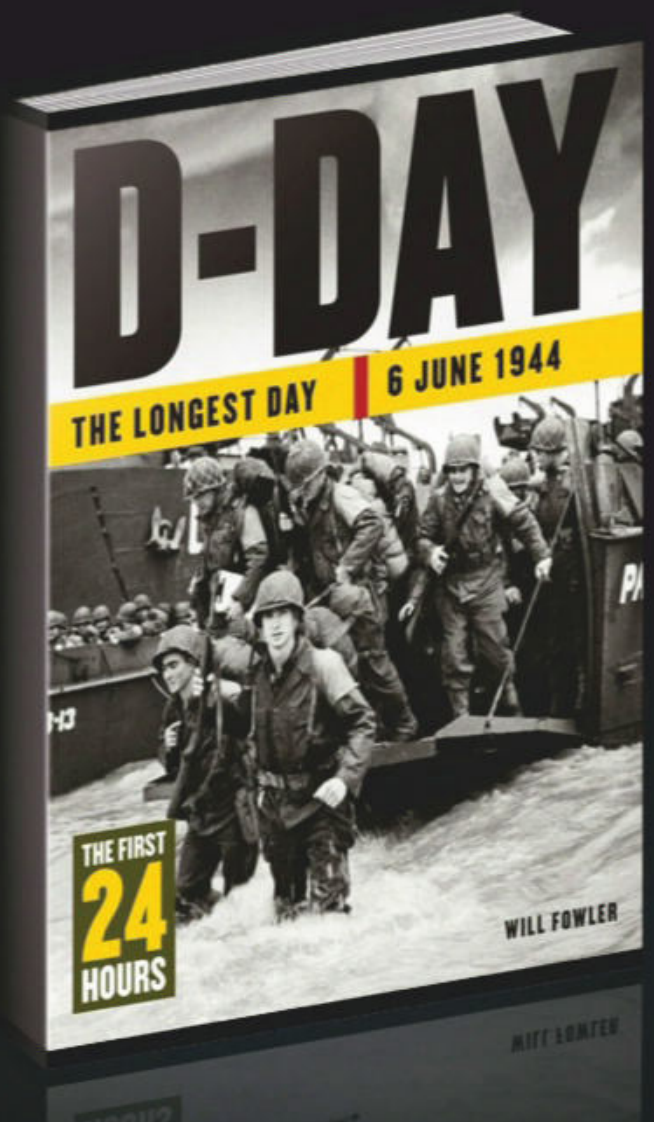
**Author:** Will Fowler **Publisher:** Amber Books **Price:** £19.99

Will Fowler's book promises to provide a detailed view of the first 24 hours of the Normandy landings, the invasion of France that moved World War II into its final phase. With such a book, where the focus is to be on a 24-hour period, there is always the question of how much background detail to include. Readers need to know how the stage was set, but if too much background is included there is the risk of the book becoming just another general history.

Unfortunately Fowler chooses to devote about half of this book to the build-up to D-Day. Not only does this render the title rather misleading, it also leaves any reader who is familiar with the subject feeling let down. Fowler's first chapter,

The Road to Operation Overlord, goes all the way back to the start of the war in 1939. Making matters worse is the way in which the narrative jumps around confusingly, and the impression is that there was just too much information to comfortably fit into a single chapter.

It is only on page 95 that we get down to business, with the paratroopers and glider-born troops going into action. There are some very useful maps, but there are only around 80 pages devoted to the events on that critical first day. This remains a useful introduction for the uninitiated reader (outside of that weak first chapter), but it could have been, and indeed claimed to be, so much more. **DS**





# BIG WEEK

HISTORIAN JAMES HOLLAND TELLS THE STORY OF THE AIR CAMPAIGN THAT MADE OPERATION OVERLORD POSSIBLE

**Author** James Holland **Publisher** Corgi Books, 2019 **Price** £9.99

During the third week of February 1944, the combined Allied air forces launched their first-ever round-the-clock bomber offensive against Germany. Code-named Operation Argument, this monumental air assault quickly became known as Big Week. The planners intended to attack the German aircraft industry to lure the Luftwaffe into a decisive battle where it could be damaged so badly that the Allies would achieve air superiority to ensure the success of the invasion of continental Europe. The air offensive took place at a time when the bomber war was not turning out as planned. They needed clear skies to invade Europe and even though the Luftwaffe was in crisis, short of resources and hampered by chaotic leadership, they were holding their own against the superior numbers of Allied aircraft.

Following the fortunes of pilots, aircrew and civilians on both sides, James Holland has produced a hard-hitting, authoritative narrative of one of the Second World War's most critical moments, one that culminated in the largest air battle ever witnessed.

In 1944, Operation Argument was uppermost in the thoughts of Allied military commanders. This was the chance to strike a deadly blow at the industrial backbone of the Luftwaffe. The plan had been drawn up by the Combined Operational Planning Committee (COPC), consisting of representatives of RAF Bomber and Fighter Commands, as well as Eighth Air Force. It was a coordinated tactical plan for a new, specific operation. Key to its success was a week of half-decent weather, which had not yet come about. In early January, a small force of 68 B-17s was sent to Münster, escorted by some 430 fighters, while nearly 500 hit Kiel. Among the task force pilots was Jimmy Stewart, the future Hollywood star who was awarded two Distinguished Flying Crosses, among other decorations.

Operation Argument came to fruition shortly before the Luftwaffe's bomber offensive ordered by Hitler the previous summer. On the night of 21/22 January, more than 200 German aircraft dropped nearly 500 tons of bombs on London. The effect was to stiffen the Allies' resolve to take the fight to the enemy by smashing Germany's air attack capability.

Saturday, 19 February 1944 dawned dry, with a biting wind and plenty of cloud. The weather reports coming in were mixed: cloud over Leipzig, clear skies over Berlin. It was far from ideal, but it was decided the operation would go ahead. The relentless bombing continued throughout the night of 24/25 February and on Saturday 26, after more than 3,000 sorties over a period of six days, Operation Argument was over. The strategic bombing of Germany by British and American forces, according to US military sources, had reduced the enemy's two-engine fighter production by 80 per cent, that of single-engine fighters by 60 per cent and wiped out 25 per cent of bomber production. In all, some 70 per cent of the aircraft factory buildings targeted were destroyed. "The most marked impact of Big Week," the author points out, "was unquestionably the Luftwaffe's loss of aircraft and particularly pilots." **JS**



**“JAMES HOLLAND HAS PRODUCED A HARD-HITTING, AUTHORITATIVE NARRATIVE OF ONE OF THE SECOND WORLD WAR’S MOST CRITICAL MOMENTS, ONE THAT CULMINATED IN THE LARGEST AIR BATTLE EVER WITNESSED”**



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## ★ CLASSIC WAR FILMS ★

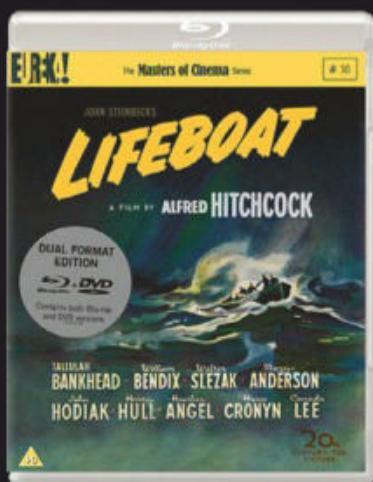
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In this issue, **History of War** readers have the chance to win a brilliant bundle of classic war films, all brought into crisp 1080p quality on Blu-ray. This bundle includes critically acclaimed films such as *Sink The Bismarck!* and *Lifeboat*, as well as several titles from Eureka Entertainment's *Masters of Cinema* series. This prize is worth a total value of £93.95. For your chance to win, simply visit [HistoryAnswers.co.uk](http://HistoryAnswers.co.uk).

### LIFEBOAT

After a Nazi torpedo reduces an ocean liner to wooden splinters and scorched personal effects, the survivors of the attack pull themselves aboard a drifting lifeboat in the hope of eventual rescue. But the motivations of the German submarine captain (Walter Slezak) might extend beyond mere survival.



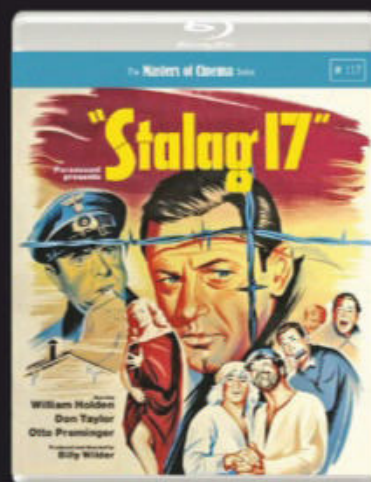
### THE SAGA OF ANATAHAN

Set during the dying stages of World War II, Anatahan tells the story of 12 Japanese seamen stranded on a forgotten island for seven years. Accompanied only by Keiko (Akemi Negishi), a young Japanese woman, all discipline is soon overcome by a struggle for power and control over Keiko's affections.



### STALAG 17

William Holden stars as the laconic J.J. Sefton, a prisoner whose cynical and mercenary disposition leads his fellow prisoners to conjecture his role as an informant after two men are shot in an escape attempt. But who exactly is the real spy shuttling inside knowledge to the ever-watchful Oberst von Scherbach?



### SINK THE BISMARCK!

Nazi Germany's greatest battleship is pinned down at her anchorage in Norway. Making a break for freedom and the safety of air cover from the Luftwaffe, the great ship is chased by the Royal Navy, led by the Admiralty's Chief of Operations, Captain Jonathan Shepard (Kenneth More), and WRNS Second Officer Anne Davis (Dana Wynter).



### YANKS

Three very different women find themselves attracted to American G.I.s at a new military base in town, but quickly interactions between the Yanks and their British hosts begin to strain under the tension of the war, throwing uncertainty over their new romances. Starring Richard Gere and Vanessa Redgrave.



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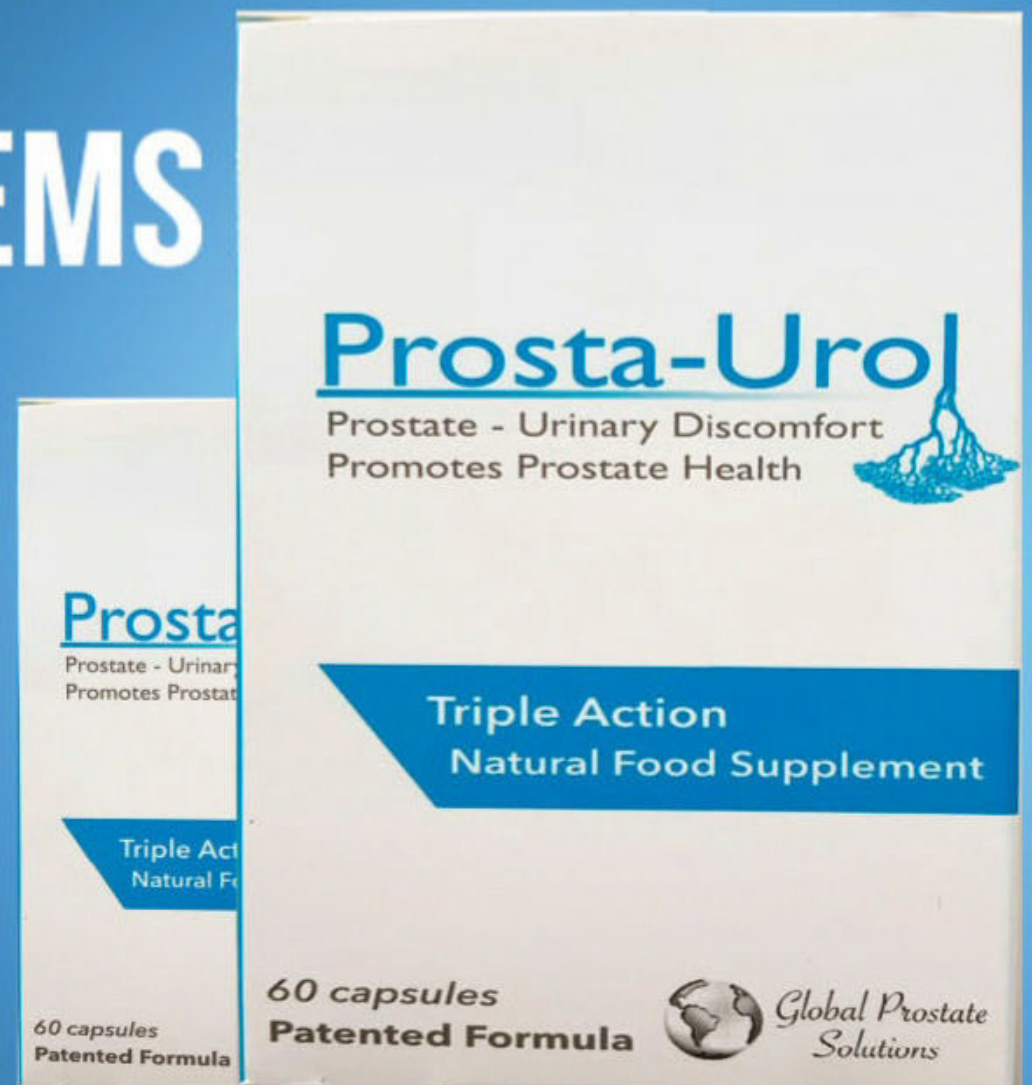
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75 years ago Nazi Germany launched its V-1 and V-2  
technology against allied cities – spreading new terror  
and destruction across the continent

Image: Alamy

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# OLIVER CROMWELL'S FUNERAL BANNER

This remarkable fabric survival from 1658 is a silk escutcheon that was draped over the coffin of "Old Ironsides"



*Cromwell was the decisive commander in many Parliamentary victories including Marston Moor, Naseby, Preston, Dunbar and Worcester*



*Of the 2,006 escutcheons that were hung or flown at Cromwell's funeral and lying in state, only four have survived*

Although he was, and remains, a deeply controversial figure, Oliver Cromwell was indisputably one of England's greatest generals. As the most influential commander of the New Model Army, Cromwell was instrumental in Parliament's victory over Charles I. One of the key regicides that was responsible for Charles's execution, "Old Ironsides" later fell out with Parliament and became 'Lord Protector' of the republican Commonwealth.

Ironically, when Cromwell died on 3 September 1658 he was king in all but name and oversaw a military dictatorship. His funeral at Westminster Abbey was designed to rival any previous monarch but his body quickly decomposed. Instead, he was privately buried before his elaborate public funeral on 23 November 1658, which featured an empty coffin. The ceremony closely resembled

that which had followed the death of James I in 1625 and cost the then astronomical sum of £60,000.

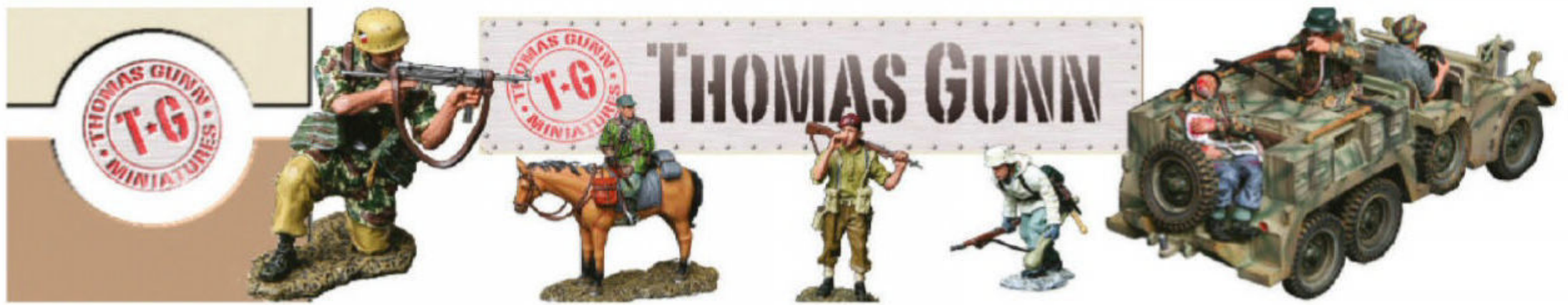
Cromwell's hearse was draped with this painted and gilt silk escutcheon (banner). It is painted with Cromwell's arms as Lord Protector of the separate kingdoms of England, Scotland and Ireland and topped with a royal crown. Although he was not a king, Cromwell had been offered the throne by Parliament and was even addressed as "His Highness". The crown therefore represented his status as head of state and one half of the banner was also painted black to denote that he had died.

Despite the pomp of Cromwell's funeral, his corpse was subsequently exhumed in January 1661 following the restoration of Charles II. The body was subjected to a posthumous execution, which was a symbolic Royalist act to recast the Lord Protector as a traitor.

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Oliver Cromwell's funeral banner is held in the collections of the National Army Museum in Chelsea, London. For more information visit: [www.nam.ac.uk](http://www.nam.ac.uk)





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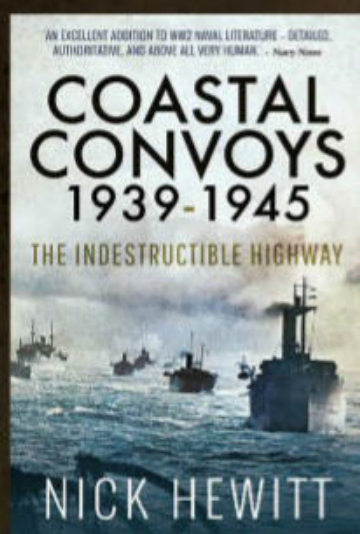
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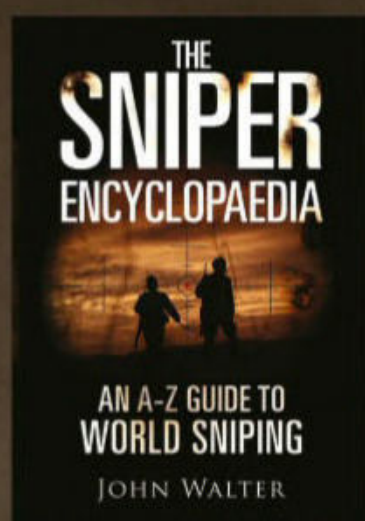


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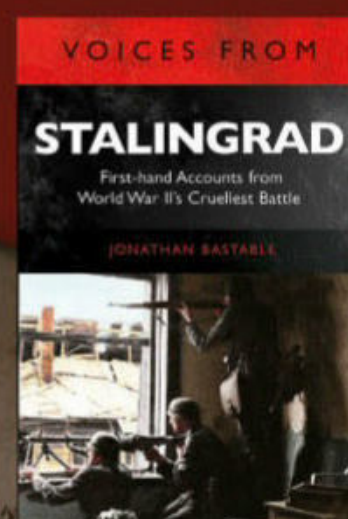
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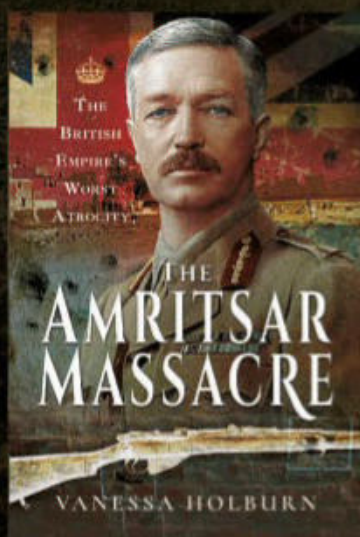
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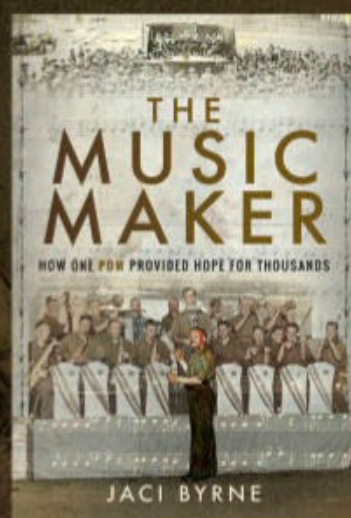
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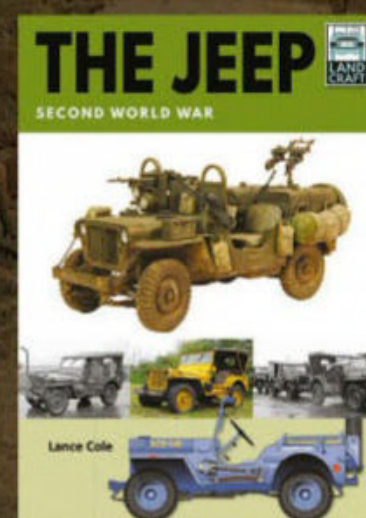
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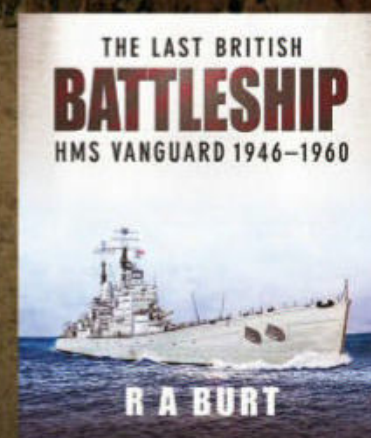
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